



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage



GREEN-SCHOOLS NATIONAL MARINE CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION 2024



TIDES ARE CHANGING



FOREWORD

I was delighted to be asked to judge the Green-Schools Marine Creative Writing Competition 2024 - "Tides are changing." This is the fourth year of this inspiring competition, and we, at Green-Schools, are thrilled to receive hundreds of entries each year, and to have the privilege of reading the wonderfully creative stories and poems which our young writers enter.

This year, many of the authors focused on how climate change and pollution are changing our ocean environments for the worse, but they also encouraged the reader to be hopeful and to take action and work together to restore these important habitats. These stories and poems are an important call to action and demonstrate the passion that Ireland's young people have for protecting the planet.

I would like to thank all of the students who entered this year's competition. I hope you continue to use your creativity and imagination to raise your voice for the environment, and to inspire others.

This competition is proudly supported by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, to whom we extend sincere our sincere gratitude. We would also like to thank our friends at Poetry Ireland, for their support of the competition and all of the teachers and parents who assisted in submitting entries.

I hope you enjoy this wonderful collection of stories and poems, and well done again to all our winners!

Joanne Scott.
Green-Schools National Manager



GREEN-SCHOOLS NATIONAL MARINE CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION 2024 “TIDES ARE CHANGING”

This annual competition, which is proudly supported by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, encourages primary and secondary school students working towards (or previously awarded) their Green Flag for Global Citizenship Marine Environment, to explore the ocean through a short story or poem.

The theme for this year's competition was "*Tides are changing*" which was inspired by the theme for World Ocean Day 2023: "Planet Ocean: Tides are changing". The theme was open to interpretation - some of the writers warned us of climate change, and the impact this will have on our marine environments; while others explored the issues of marine litter and pollution - how our oceans have been negatively impacted by human activity over the last century. Some chose a more hopeful interpretation, and wrote about how the tide is changing in terms of how communities can be empowered to work together to protect and conserve our ocean and coasts. We hope you enjoy reading the wonderfully creative stories and poems, entered into this year's competition.

PRIZES

The prizes for four national winners include a trophy, a €100 book token, a whale/dolphin adoption from the Irish Whale and Dolphin Group and a free writing workshop for the winning student's class from Poetry Ireland. There are also prizes for 2nd and 3rd place in each category! Winning entries were shared as part of Green-Schools Marine Week in April - a week of online activities celebrating our oceans!

CATEGORIES

There were four age categories for entries:

- 1st & 2nd class
- 3rd & 4th class
- 5th & 6th class
- Secondary School

JUDGES

- Catherine Gaul, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Moira Cardiff, Poetry Ireland
- Joanne Scott, An Taisce

WINNERS

1ST & 2ND CLASS

1st place: Ava Sheridan, St John of God N.S.

2nd place: Eliza Rainsford, Scoil Mhuire Kilvemnon

3rd place: Oisín Mahon, Gortnamona N.S.

3RD & 4TH CLASS

1st place: Aoife Lanigan, St John of God N.S.

2nd place: Anne Gallagher, Scoil Mhuire Kilvemnon

3rd place: Alexia O Rourke Cullinan, St Mary's N.S.

5TH & 6TH CLASS

1st place: Lucy Lee O'Donnell, St John of God N.S.

2nd place: Henry Buckley, Church St N.S.

3rd place: Lucy Walsh, Burrow N.S.

SECONDARY SCHOOL

1st place: Aisling Espey, Sandford Park School

2nd place: Aoibhinn Boyle, St Vincent's Secondary School

3rd place: Poppi Gogan, Rathdown School

1ST & 2ND CLASS CATEGORY 1ST PLACE WINNER

“THE TIDES ARE CHANGING”

The sea is full of creatures
that are getting very sick.
And, it is pretty obvious
they're eating toxic plastic!
Our oceans are important,
it is our animals' home.
So my message to everybody
is to bring your rubbish home!
You do not know the damage
that is effecting the sea
by the help of you, him, she and me
we can help our oceans be rubbish free.

**By Ava Sheridan,
St John of God N.S.**



1ST & 2ND CLASS CATEGORY 2ND PLACE WINNER

“THE TIDES ARE CHANGING”

Be a picker, don't litter.
The tides are rising and we are not trying.
Oceans are key to nearly
everything we need.
Keep the oceans from dying and
start trying.

By Eliza Rainsford,
Scoil Mhuire Kilvemnon



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1ST & 2ND CLASS CATEGORY 3RD PLACE WINNER

“SAVING BILLY”

On a warm sunny day, Bob and Jeffy were going to the beach. Then they looked at the sea and saw a shark.

“A shark! Ahhh!” screamed Jeffy.

Then the shark said “My name is Billy. Can you help me?”.

“What is it?” said Bob.

“I will show you. Come with me.” said Billy.

They saw how many bits of plastic were in the ocean.

“Oh my!” said Bob and Jeffy. “What happened here?” they asked.

“People threw plastic in here. Fish are dying here. Now it’s not safe here. We try to avoid plastic at all costs”.

Then Billy said “if we see plastic we swim and hide. If one of us eats it we might die. Can you help?” asked Billy.

“We can try” said Bob and Jeffy.

Bob started picking up heavy plastic. Then Jeffy got a machine. They got most of the plastic out. “It was fun doing it too.” they said. Then they went back to Billy but they saw that he was choking on plastic! They helped him and got the plastic out. So they went on a journey together.

They saw a jellyfish and followed it. It led them to a group of jellyfish. Then they continued with their journey. They talked to a fisherman too. After that they went to get more plastic. Bob was getting tired.

Jeffy said “don’t be tired. Never, ever give up!”. Billy helped too. He picked up the heavy pieces. They picked up over sixty-nine hundred thousand bits of plastic.

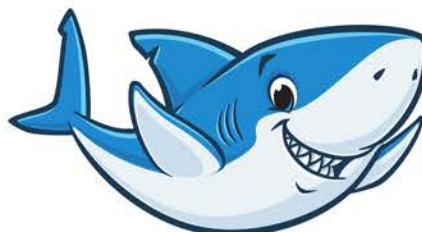
Then they saw a turtle. The turtle was friendly. It told Billy his name. He was called Tobo. They all became friends. Then, out of nowhere a megalodon blasted in.

“Run!” shouted Billy.

“Hellp!” shouted the megalodon. “I am choking!” There was plastic in his throat. They all helped.

“We need to get all the plastic” said Jeffy. “We will keep going”.

**By Oisín Mahon.
Gortnamona N.S.**



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3RD & 4TH CLASS CATEGORY 1ST PLACE WINNER

“TIDES ARE CHANGING”

Hello, my name is Sally, Sally the sweet wrapper. I've been to a lot of places since I was made, I've been in factories and in machines, I've been put on a grumpy, bitter sweet and been put in a smelly bin, but the most interesting place I've ever been is the sea. It all started one day when I was in a pocket and suddenly a big gust of wind blew me out of the pocket! And then another gust blew me into the sea!

What I saw when I got into the sea was amazing! There was a school of fish that happily swam around me. There was lots of colourful coral as far as I could see. But then I realized that the fish weren't swimming happily around me, they were swimming around me because they were scared! I looked behind them and I saw loads of my friends coming towards me, suddenly the ocean looked dark and dirty. *We're not meant to be here, I thought, we're hurting the animals and the ocean!*

“Help!” someone screamed.

I looked around. It was my friend Nora, she was stuck on a turtle's mouth! I tried to help her but the turtle swam away. *Oh no! This is worse than I thought!*

I told all my friends what I thought, but they just laughed.

“My grandpa told me the sea was made for us” said Conor the Can.

“Was your grandpa ever in the sea Conor?” I asked.

“Uhhh, now that you mention it I don't think he was” Conor realised.

“Sally's right” said my friend Tina the Tayto packet.

Suddenly I saw a huge net that was attached to the end of a boat! I floated to the surface and I saw the boat, it had a giant sign on the side of it that said “THE PICKER BOAT”.

“Quick everyone, get in the net!” I shouted. Then I saw Nora and the turtle swimming past us.

“I'm going to save Nora” I said, “ I can't leave her!”



"But you can't miss the boat!" shouted Tina.

"It's ok!" I said, "I'll be quick."

I quickly float over the Nora.

"Sally!" she sobbed "you came back for me!"

"Yes I did, I wasn't going to leave you!"

"Oh thank you, thank you so much Sally" she cried.

I managed to get her free just before the boat went out of our view. We swam quickly into the net. When we moved away the place we were at, it looked so much better! It made me feel happy to see it like that!

"See everyone" I said "Isn't it better without us?"

"It is!" exclaimed Tina.

"Wow!" said Nora.

"Meh" said Conor "I preferred it when we were in it."

I glanced at him. "Well... it's going to be a long journey so I suggest ..."

"We're here." someone said.

"Oh well" I said.

Suddenly we were lifted on to the land. In front of us was a giant factory! We were brought inside and put on a conveyor belt in small groups. I was in a group with Nora, Conor, Tina and a shampoo bottle called Sarah. We went through loads of machines and guess what we came out as?! A 100% recyclable plastic bottle! And remember to reduce, reuse and recycle!

**By Aoife Lanigan,
St John of God N.S.**



3RD & 4TH CLASS CATEGORY 2ND PLACE WINNER

“TIDES ARE CHANGING”

The tides are changing,
While the fish are raging.
The whales are ageing,
There's not much remaining.

Keep the ocean safe,
We have less than eight.
The sea has faith,
We have to solve the case.

The tides are rising,
It's not surprising.
I am advertising,
For you to start compromising.

The sea is fun,
It's number one.
Litter has not just begun,
It might have won.

The turtles are dying,
And we aren't crying
Help along, it's petrifying.

You need to recycle,
Don't be a psycho.
Help the ocean keep its cycle.

The climate is getting hotter,
Help the saltwater.



Keep the sea clean,
don't be mean.
We don't want it seen
In the green.

If we work together
We can save the weather.
It's not a lot of pressure
But it's not a whatever.

Help clean the sea,
And you will succeed.
Don't disagree,
We're the referee

By Anne Gallagher.
Scoil Mhuire Kilvemonon



3RD & 4TH CLASS CATEGORY 3RD PLACE WINNER

“TIDES ARE CHANGING”

Tides are changing
The trees are swaying
It affects the seven seas
But not the bees
It is causing drama
I love llamas

Thanks to pollution
We need a solution
So stop burning fossil fuels
It is even affecting schools

My life is changing
My mind is swaying
There are wars going on
Will life even go on

We have electric cars
There is still wars
We are chopping down trees
No more buzzing from the bees

The wildlife will change
Earth is strange
There are wars over money
It is not funny.

**By Alexia O'Rourke Cullinan
St Mary's N.S.**



5TH & 6TH CLASS CATEGORY 1ST PLACE WINNER

“TIDES ARE CHANGING”

The dolphin opened its one shut eye and took in its surroundings. Water gushed over his streamlined body as he stretched his tail and shook himself awake. Swimming over towards the best fishing spot, which was always packed with tuna and sardines, he noticed a soft dull humming sound that rapidly grew louder, the wise and knowledgeable dolphin sensed danger straight away.

The once far away danger was advancing quickly, but just as the dolphin thought he'd make it away...too late! Bang, scrape, pain... He felt his body screaming in agony as the huge ship propeller tore across his skin. Then it was over, his back was burning like it was on fire and he could see the water clouding a dark shade of red. This was the end, all because of those stupid humans. His last thought was of Emma, his wife. Then he sank into the deep depths of unconsciousness.

“He's alive grandma, come quick!”

The dolphin's eyes fluttered open. Standing above him was an excited little girl. Her curly, black hair was forced into two short plots and she was jumping up and down happily.

“Now, now, don't scare him”, came an old calming voice.

An elderly lady wearing a floral dress approached the dolphin and young girl. She was wearing brown sandals that matched the complexion of her tanned skin. The dolphin was unsure about these new people. He tried vainly to move off the area of wet sand which he had washed up on. His efforts were to no avail, his scraped back hurt more than ever. He sunk back onto the soft wet sand and allowed his two rescuers to check him over.

Two weeks later, the new the now fit and healthy dolphin was swimming around the pool in Magda (the grandma) and Emelie's (the young girl) house. His wound had been treated and checked over and over by Magda, a former veterinary nurse. The pool had been sacrificed for the recovering dolphin and filled with sea water as a temporary home for him.



On the evening when Magda and Emelie released the dolphin, the sun was low in the sky, creating purple and pink colours on the horizon. There was only a gentle breeze that carried the light, salty air. Emelie bent down and kissed the dolphin on the crown of his head.

"Goodbye, Finny, come back and visit soon", she whispered, with tears streaming down her rosy face.

The dolphin flapped his tail in a salute and gave a dolphiny sort of smile. He loved his girl just like his new name. He would miss Emelie. Magda bent down (despite her bad back) and patted Finny on the rump.

"Bye, Finny, good luck!" said Magda.

And, with that he was off! Finny swam away confidently into the horizon. He was home!
Yes, he thought, some humans are bad. Some humans don't care about this beautiful planet Earth we live on. They make plastic, emit greenhouse gases and pollute our ocean. They drive around in cars, not caring what goes into the air behind them. But, some like Magda and Emelie are heroes, who save animals and our deserving planet. They take small steps that will contribute to a big effort towards climate change. These people are the ones that will help us move forward with solving this climate crisis. Yes, tides are changing, but if we all work as one, we can calm this storm.

**By Lucy Lee O'Donnell
St John of God N.S.**



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5TH & 6TH CLASS CATEGORY

2ND PLACE WINNER

“MR FINN”

Mr Finn used to be the funniest and happiest fish in the whole coral reef. Yet one day he came back from hunting shrimps without his colourful clown triggerfish wife. He locked himself in his coral and didn't come back out. Some fish tried to get him out, but he just shouted at them. Everyone tried to drag him into a game of puffer ball but he just shrugged them off and kept on swimming.

So, that very night Mr Finn went out in search for his wife. He got to the massive current and swam into it and zoomed all around the current. After a few minutes later, he arrived at the rubbish pile. Just after he swam out of the current, a massive plane crash landed in the middle of the rubbish pile. He started weaving through the rubbish. He saw people climbing out of the plane and floating on the rubbish. He saw a member of the dolphin committee.

“Excuse me,” Mr Finn said.

“Yes,” said the member.

“Can you help those people who just crashed please?”

“Er...fine, OK,” the dolphin said. It called the other dolphins and they carried all the humans away.

“Phew! At least I saved a few lives today,” thought Mr Finn.

He continued his search for his wife. A few hours later, he came across a mansion made of rubbish. He walked in and in a can of dog food, was Mrs Finn. Mr Finn swam over but was blocked by a giant oarfish.

“No, give her back!” shouted Mr Finn.

“I have no intention of that,” laughed the oarfish.

“Why? What do you want with her?” shouted Mr Finn.



"I shall make her go up to the humans and she will make them stop clearing the rubbish."

"You do realize that A - she can't breathe air and B - the humans don't understand us and C - it's good that they're clearing the rubbish? Why do you want it?" said Mr. Finn.

"Well, I can get my minions to get me food that got stuck in the rubbish and it is gourmet! As for the A, B and C - I shall figure it out, and as for you, you'd make a nice snack," said the oarfish mischievously.

Just before he was about to gobble Mr Finn up, the shark committee swam in and started to fight the oarfish. He put up a very good fight, but in the end he was defeated and the shark committee came over to Mr Finn.

"We are so sorry he did not listen to you. We did not realise the danger of him rising until now. He was dabbling in the dark ways of water, it was nearly going to consume him."

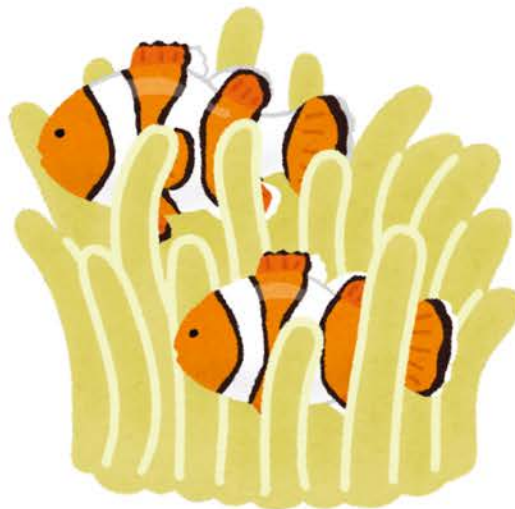
"But, that's forbidden!" said Mr. Finn nervously.

"Yes and for good reason," said the leader.

Mr Finn saw the oarfish cuffed in seaweed. Ha!

He swam home that night to cheers and laughter, and from then on Mr Finn was once again the funniest and happiest fish in the coral reef.

**By Henry Buckley.
Church Street N.S.**



5TH & 6TH CLASS CATEGORY

3RD PLACE WINNER

“TIDES ARE CHANGING”

Tides are changing, seas galore, we need to help our planet a little bit more. This is a story about a little girl who found out what's happening around the world. So, she made her voice loud, she made her voice clear, she made her voice loud so everyone could hear.

Once there was a girl called Lily. Lily was just a normal girl who loved learning about the earth, until one day she learned about climate change and wanted to put a stop to it. So she made a poster saying *“Tides are changing, Seas galore, we need to help our planet a little bit more! Come to the beach at 12 O’Clock to help clean it and do your part to put a stop to climate change.”*

It was finally Saturday, Lily jumped out of bed with excitement then she put her clothes on and ate her breakfast as fast as she could, ran outside and waited for her Mum and Dad. Lily was so excited, she ran the whole way to the beach and couldn't believe it when she saw that no one was there. Lily went home feeling foolish and mad at herself, *“Who would tidy a beach with some normal girl?”*

She went to bed that night, woke up the next day and said to herself *“I won't give up, I will try again!”* So, Lily ran outside with a marker and changed the date on her poster to the next Saturday. She saw her friends in the playground and wanted to go and play too, but she was determined to put a stop to climate change. It was Saturday and Lily felt confident and was ready. But when she went to the beach there was no one there again, she went home and made a different poster this time. It said the same thing, but it was bigger and had lots of colour.

Later that day, Lily went to bed saying to herself *“Everyone likes colours don't they? Maybe it's pointless, I should just give up. Wait a second, NO, I'm not giving up!”*

The next morning, Lily was even more confident than the last time and was walking to the beach when she looked around the corner and couldn't believe how many people were there. Her Granny and Grandad were there and her best friends even came Sarah, Danny and Amy. She ran over and gave her Granny and Grandad a big hug. Then she went over to her friends and said: *“How are you guys here?”*

“We saw your amazing poster”, said Sarah.



"It was really cool", said Danny.

"We wouldn't miss it for the world", said Amy.

After a while they started the beach-clean. At the end, Lily couldn't believe what she saw, there were over ninety bags of rubbish and over one hundred people had attended.

Later that night when Lily was going to bed she was so happy and didn't know what this new feeling was. She was so proud of herself, she fell asleep with a smile on her face.

The next night Lily dreamt that she was on the news and they were talking about her mission to put a stop to climate change. But when she woke up she realised it was just a dream and was really disappointed. When she went downstairs she was upset and her Mum asked "What's wrong Lily?"

"I had a dream that I was on the news and they were talking about my mission to stop climate change and then when I woke up it wasn't real."

Then Lily's mum turned on the TV and she couldn't believe her eyes. She was on the TV.

On Monday morning she walked into her classroom and everyone was talking about what happened. During class the teacher walked up to her and said "I saw what happened on the news Lily, I couldn't believe it."

"Thank you", Lily said, trying not to burst out with excitement. Throughout the day more and more people were talking to Lily about her beach-clean and all she said was, "I am just a normal girl who set my mind on something I wanted to do and made it happen".

A few years later there were people all around the world cleaning their local beaches and doing their part to help save the planet and it worked! Climate change was still there but reports have said that the warm temperatures have decreased by 30%. All of the countries went back to their normal temperature and Lily is now famous all around the world and still trying to save our planet. Today lots of people ask her "How did you do it?" And Lily always says "I am just a normal girl who set my mind on something I wanted to do and made it happen".

This story is to show that if you put your mind to something and never give up it WILL happen. We all must do our part by helping to save our beautiful planet.

**By Lucy Walsh,
Burrow N.S.**



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SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORY 1ST PLACE WINNER

“MURÚCH”

When all of the world is asleep, like a child at last settling down, she slips out, leaving nothing but her absence in her wake. The cliffs lie ahead, suspended in the inky black but these are not uncharted waters; this is a pilgrimage that she makes each night. Her steps are sure as she cuts her path down the rock face and, even after all this time but perhaps because of it, her heart catches with the first lick of salt, lifted along by the chilling breeze.

She wraps her shawl together, a poor imitation of her fine coat, her second skin, another reminder of the threads, woven in to an ever-tightening net, that bind her here on land. The ground beneath her is solid and steady, but it does not whisper to her like the sea does, sharing snatches of stories and songs, does not hold her home and her heart. As she approaches the ebb and flow of the moonlit water, the jagged and unwavering stone beneath her is softened, smoothed and refined by the tides' patient hands.

The sea rushes ashore to meet her, foaming and frothing in its haste, and she knows that it recognises one of its own. She was cut from its cloth, spun as part of its rich and wild tapestry and her heart aches at the distance forced between them.

The water rises just then; at first to her waist, then her sternum, then grows bolder again, all but enveloping her entirely, crowing her in a white, frothy wreath. In her element, her vision sharpens and it's like looking through sea glass again, the world becoming richer, rarer, even, cast in the prevailing hues of her fondest memories. As her lungs fill with brine, she can't ignore the new bitter taste to it, a sharpness so unnatural that cuts right down to her teeth.



There are times where, on land, she almost doesn't feel the pit in her chest, the call of the sea. Almost. But she never forgot, not really; her very heart is etched with the feeling of it all. Yet even so, there is unease, that cold prickling of skin which had first settled over her on that night many moons ago. The sky had been gauzy and jaundiced, the moon casting its sickly light across the beach's exposed back when her coat had been taken, a part of her going with it.

She hadn't fought then. She'd heard the stories. The futility of it. The baring of teeth and the steel of glares can only get you so far in the land of strangers, so far from the sea.

So she'd taken it in her stride, as shaky as her new legs were, and played the part.



SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORY 2ND PLACE WINNER

“NEARLY THERE”

I know the sea is near.

I taste the salt on my lips,
the whistle in my ears,
the crunch in my step.

I know the sea is near.

I see glee in the shallows,
the shimmer of water,
The glistening of bodies.

I know the sea is near.

I hear shocked whispers,
grinding of tins,
The crinkle of plastic.

**By Aoibhinn Boyle.
St Vincent's Secondary School**



SECONDARY SCHOOL CATEGORY 3RD PLACE WINNER

“TIDES ARE CHANGING”

The ocean is beautiful,
Sparkling and blue,
A breathtaking visual,
A treat to get to view.

But underneath the shimmering surface,
The beauty ebbs away,
Where something darker takes its place,
That threatens us all today.

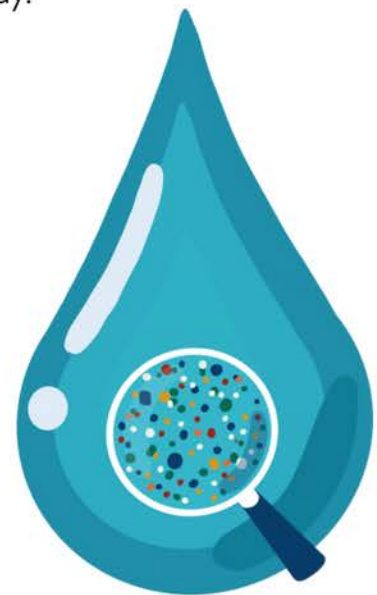
Because underneath the sea,
Is where the microplastics lie,
Threatening the future of you and me,
And letting the marine life die.

You see, the plastic that ends up in the marine,
It *never* goes away,
It stays, but gets smaller and becomes unseen,
Creating what we call microplastics today.

Tiny as they might seem,
Microplastics are no joke,
For pollution is what they teem,
They swallow up our hope.

Tides are changing,
But we still have a chance.
Our oceans need saving,
And we need to act fast.

**By Poppi Gogan,
Rathdown School**



**CONGRATULATIONS TO
ALL THE WINNERS
AND WELL DONE TO
EVERYONE WHO
ENTERED THIS YEAR'S
COMPETITION!**

- GREEN-SCHOOLS MARINE TEAM



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Green-Schools supports the
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