Changing Computer Waste Practices at a Secondary School	
Petal: Purchasing and Waste	Specialist: Marie Harder
Type of school: Secondary	Size of school: 1500 children

The school has a team of caretakers, groundsmen and cleaners that work closely together, flexibly covering different areas of work and thus finding the time to collect recyclable materials from staff areas which the council collects, and repair so many items that the school seldom buys new furniture, and thus also seldom throws it out. The kitchen also makes up food on demand, so there is remarkably little kitchen waste. All in all, this school produces very little operational waste. Furthermore, teachers at the school have a significant operation of collecting reusable books, clothes and items that children donate, to be sent to a linked school in Africa.

Like all other schools, however, the school uses an increasing number of computers, with over 700 at the moment. They even have a team that re-uses and repairs those, so that useful parts are removed before disposal, and a local educational charity is supported with donations of useful computers and peripherals whenever possible. Despite all best efforts, the school has about 20 monitors, 20 desktops and 10 laptops – all cannibalised – to dispose of this year, and last year the cost was of the order of £500.

The Waste team from the ENGAUGE project decided that the main area showing room for improvement was the disposal of computer equipment. They thus investigated a variety of disposal options for the school for the cannibalised equipment, which is now classed as a hazardous waste which requires competent disposal. Five different companies were found which offered different types of services; some including data removal, some not; some requiring storage, some not. Several of the options included quotes well under the £500 cost for the previous year, with the cheapest two coming in at £100 and £120 + VAT.

In addition, the ENGAUGE team found five charities that take computers for charities, which

may allow the school to find a reuse option for some items rather than disposal, and which may be particularly useful for forward planning, in cases where sets of computers may be disposed of without cannibalising. Both of these lists will be useful not only for this school but also for other schools who wish to consider such options for their computer waste.

This single will hopefully save the school up to £400 annually. Using the Charity outlets may save further on future disposals, and be able to be integrated in the wider curriculum alongside the current recycling sent to Africa. However, in future the school should learn more about schemes whereby providers of new computer equipment make good provision for reuse or disposal of outgoing equipment, as this is likely to become the norm in the near future.

This project required 5 days of ENGAUGE experts planning, visiting, consulting by telephone, researching options and writing up (including work on other areas of waste for the school). Other possible plans include a wormery to enrich curriculum and a lunchtime Green Club.