ALGAL BLOOMS POSTER COMPETITION

Teacher guidebook 2026

Waikato
REGIONAL COUNCIL
Te Kaunihera ā Rohe o Waikato

Instructions

Use the year-level instructions below to help students create posters that teach others how to:

- recognise blue-green algal blooms
- understand why they can be dangerous
- know what to do.

The most important messages should be:

If in doubt, stay out.

Posters should be clear, eye-catching and suitable for sharing with whānau, kura/schools and the wider community.

Size and format information:

Recommended format: Landscape is better but whatever you like.
If using digital tools, set up the poster so it can be clearly read on a screen or printed.

Must-have messages:

Every poster must include: one clear safety message, one way to identify a bloom, one action people should take, and at least one image or symbol.

Important safety wording students can use:

- If in doubt, stay out
- Keep dogs away
- Tell an adult
- Report it to Waikato Regional Council on **0800 800 401**

Important points to remember to make clear in the poster designs:

- Blue-green algae can look like green paint, pea soup, cloudy water, scum, blobs or mats.
- Some blooms can harm people, pets and wildlife.

Years 1-2 Simple safety

Teacher instructions

Read the key message aloud: ‘If it looks green, yucky or strange, stay out and tell an adult.’
Show pictures of safe-looking water and bloom-affected water.
Students create a poster with one big picture and one short safety sentence.

Student task

- Draw a lake or river with green scum or cloudy green water.
- Add a person or dog staying away from the water.
- Write one short warning sentence.

Suggested poster template

Top

Big headline such as ‘Stay Out!’

Middle

Large drawing of the water.

Bottom

One safety sentence, for example ‘Tell an adult if the water looks green.’
Include the freephone number **0800 800 401** or council website address **waikatoregion.govt.nz**

Image ideas

- green water
- a child pointing to the water
- a dog on a lead
- a big stop sign
- whānau choosing a safe place away from the water.

Success criteria

The poster has a big picture, a clear warning, and shows people or pets staying away from unsafe water.

Years 3-4 Spot it, stop, tell

Teacher instructions

Explain that some algae are natural, but some blooms can be harmful.
Ask students to list what a bloom might look like and what people should do.
Students create a three-part poster: spot it, stop, tell.

Student task

Create a poster that teaches younger students how to recognise a possible algal bloom and what to do next.

Suggested poster template

Top

Headline: Spot it, stop, tell.

Middle

Left: What it might look like.
Right: Why to stay out.

Bottom

Who to tell or how to report it.
Include the freephone number **0800 800 401** or council website address **waikatoregion.govt.nz**

Image ideas

- a magnifying glass looking at green water
- a red cross over swimming
- a dog behind a fence or on a lead
- a speech bubble saying ‘Tell an adult.’

Success criteria

The poster explains one sign of a bloom, one danger, and one safe action.

Years 5-6 Inform and persuade

Teacher instructions

Discuss how posters use facts, images and short messages to persuade people to act safely.
Students should include a headline, three facts or safety points, and a call to action.

Student task

Create a poster for families visiting a lake.
It must explain how to identify a bloom, why it matters, and what to do if they see one.

Suggested poster template

Top

Strong headline.

Middle

Left: ‘What it looks like.’
Right: ‘Why it can be harmful.’

Bottom

‘What you should do.’
Add a bold slogan across the bottom and the freephone number **0800 800 401** or council website address **waikatoregion.govt.nz**

Image ideas

- before-and-after water image
- warning triangle
- dog paw print with a stop symbol
- whānau picnic moved away from the water
- simple map pin for reporting.

Success criteria

The poster is accurate, persuasive, easy to read from a distance, and includes a clear call to action.

Years 7-8 Community awareness

Teacher instructions

Students should think about audience, evidence and design.
Encourage them to use accurate science language but keep wording simple enough for the public.
They should include a short explanation of cyanobacteria or blue-green algae.

Student task

Create a community awareness poster for people who swim, kayak, fish, walk dogs or visit lakes.
Include practical advice that people can follow immediately.

Suggested poster template

Top

Problem or warning headline.

Middle

Upper left: What is a blue-green algal bloom?
Upper right: How can you recognise it?
Lower left: Who is at risk?
Lower right: What should you do?

Include the freephone number **0800 800 401** or council website address **waikatoregion.govt.nz**

Image ideas

- infographic icons for people,
- pets and wildlife,
- close-up drawing of green water,
- ‘do not swim’ symbol,
- phone/reporting icon,
- lake edge scene with warning signs.

Success criteria

The poster includes science information, safety advice, an audience-specific message, and strong visual hierarchy.

Years 9-10 Evidence-based public safety

Teacher instructions

Students should create a poster that could be used as part of a public awareness campaign.
Ask them to consider target audience, credibility, layout, concise wording and accessible design.

Student task

Create a poster that uses science, visual design and a clear call to action to reduce risk around blue-green algal blooms.

Suggested poster template

Top

Campaign headline.

Middle

Main visual or infographic.
Side panel (left or right): Three evidence-based facts.

Bottom

Action steps: stay out, keep pets away, tell an adult or report it, check local water quality advice.

Include the freephone number **0800 800 401** or council website address **waikatoregion.govt.nz**

Image ideas

- infographic showing warm weather plus nutrients leading to bloom growth
- stylised lake with green scum
- warning icons
- dog safety icon
- ‘check before you swim’ panel.

Success criteria

The poster is scientifically accurate, visually compelling, suitable for a public audience, and includes a memorable safety slogan.

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He taiao mauriora **Healthy environment**

He hapori hihiri **Vibrant communities**

He ōhanga pakari **Strong economy**

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