

A unique school science project is being launched this month to investigate how primary and secondary schools in England resource practical work and the impact this has on teaching and learning. SCORE (Science Community Representing Education), a collaboration of leading science organisations, is carrying out the research to help provide a national picture of the current state of resourcing and provide evidence to inform national and local policy on the resourcing requirements of science education. SCORE would like to invite all primary and secondary schools in England to take part in this important research via a short survey, which will take place in the autumn term; schools wishing to do so should email scoreresourcing@pyetait.com.

The survey will measure how schools resource practical science against a number of benchmarks, including the equipment they have and use, the funding of science within schools and the number of teaching and technician hours. The benchmarks on which the survey are based will be available to schools in the near future, via the SCORE website, to assist schools in resource planning.

As the government's Science and Technology Select Committee emphasised in its September 2011 report into practical experiments in school science lessons and science field trips, both are "essential contributors to good quality science education". But the select committee report found that "students are not receiving the practical science education necessary to produce the next generation of scientists". Reasons for this, on which the SCORE research aims to gather evidence, included the need for qualified and experienced technicians and the provision and quality of facilities and equipment.

Professor Graham Hutchings, Chair of SCORE, said: "Practical work enables students to experience for themselves the way in which knowledge and facts are discovered, bringing a greater understanding of scientific principles and concepts. It develops practical skills that are valuable for their own sake as well as for the students' future lives and it brings the subjects alive, engaging students in ways that are impossible to achieve with purely theoretical learning.

"We hope this investigation goes to a long way to providing an accurate picture of how we can improve the provision of practical lessons across the UK."

More information: Paul Gallagher, Royal Society of Chemistry 01223 432652; 07825 186332, or visit <http://www.score-education.org/policy/wider-learning-experience/practical-work-in-science>.

Notes for editors

SCORE

SCORE is a collaboration of organisations, which aims to improve science education in UK schools and colleges by supporting the development and implementation of effective education policy. SCORE is currently chaired by Professor Graham Hutchings FRS and comprises the Association for Science Education, Institute of Physics, Royal Society, Royal Society of Chemistry, and Society of Biology. www.score-education.org

Association for Science Education

The Association for Science Education (ASE) is the largest subject association for education in the UK. Members include teachers, technicians and others involved in science education. The Association plays a significant role in promoting excellence in teaching and learning of

science in schools and colleges. Working closely with the science professional bodies, industry and business, ASE provides a UK-wide network bringing together individuals and organisations to share ideas and tackle challenges in science teaching, develop resources and foster high quality continuing professional development. www.ase.org.uk

Institute of Physics

The Institute of Physics is a leading scientific society promoting physics and bringing physicists together for the benefit of all. It has a worldwide membership of around 40 000 comprising physicists from all sectors, as well as those with an interest in physics. It works to advance physics research, application and education; and engages with policy makers and the public to develop awareness and understanding of physics. Its publishing company, IOP Publishing, is a world leader in professional scientific communications. www.iop.org

Royal Society

The Royal Society is a Fellowship of more than 1400 outstanding individuals from all areas of science, mathematics, engineering and medicine, who form a global scientific network of the highest calibre. The Society is committed to an evidence-based approach to supporting responsible policy-making within science and education, drawing upon high quality information and advice from its Fellows and Foreign Members, the wider scientific and education communities and others to achieve this. www.royalsociety.org

Royal Society of Chemistry

The Royal Society of Chemistry is the UK professional body for chemical scientists and the largest organisation in Europe for advancing the chemical sciences. Supported by a worldwide network of over 47,500 members and an international publishing business, the Society's activities span education, conferences, science policy and the promotion of chemistry to the public. www.rsc.org

Society of Biology

The Society of Biology is a single unified voice for biology: advising Government and influencing policy; advancing education and professional development; supporting its members, and engaging and encouraging public interest in the life sciences. The Society represents a diverse membership of over 80,000 - including, students, practising scientists and interested non-professionals - as individuals, or through learned societies and other organisations. The Society supports and recognises excellence in biology teaching and champion a biology curriculum that challenges students and encourages their passion for biology. www.societyofbiology.org