

## External evaluation<sup>1</sup> of the Royal Society Partnership Grants scheme

### Key findings

1. The Royal Society Partnership Grants scheme is distinctive within the busy UK landscape of STEM engagement opportunities. This unique scheme adds value with its particularly distinctive features including: the inclusion of a STEM professional partner; the prestige of the Royal Society; the catalytic nature of the funding itself; and the opportunity to do practical science over a sustained timeframe.
2. The Royal Society Partnership Grants scheme successfully meets its objectives which are:
  - a. To help students develop the key skills needed for future STEM careers and demonstrate the range of STEM career opportunities available.
  - b. To give students first-hand knowledge and experience of the scientific process to enable them to understand how 'science is done'.
3. Students, aged 5 to 18, have gained experience with and understanding of the scientific process, through participating in practical, investigative science projects. Enthusiasm was a feature frequently cited by teachers and STEM partners, along with confidence, curiosity and skills. Diversity was often evident in participating students.
4. Students have benefitted from the participation of STEM professional partners, both in terms of learning about how science is done and in terms of increased awareness of science as a possible career path. Teachers noticed an increase in the number of students considering a STEM career after taking part in a project.
5. Participating teachers have benefitted in terms of increased confidence in running practical STEM lessons and in enhanced passion for teaching STEM subjects.
6. Projects have led to positive influences on schools. Practical elements have been embedded in their schools' wider curriculum. Projects have often instigated cross-collaboration between different teachers or departments in the school.
7. STEM partners too feel they have benefitted from positive impacts, gaining new insights into school-level education, the practicalities of running engagement projects, and communicating about research.
8. Strikingly positive attitudes were evident in teachers, STEM partners and senior management regarding the success of the partnerships in which they participated. Most expected to continue their partnership.
9. The scheme is relevant, with strategic aims of the Royal Society and its Schools Engagement team being addressed. Particularly evident is the embedding of practical science in schools, as well as the development of key STEM skills for broader choices of careers. Two other strategic aims also addressed by the scheme, although with perhaps more room to grow, are widening participation in post-16 STEM subjects and enabling more disadvantaged groups to participate in STEM activities.
10. The scheme's administration is highly effective. The exceptionally helpful, responsive, and supportive (as well as professional) role played by the team is widely and deeply appreciated.

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<sup>1</sup> Summary of report by Laura Meagher PhD, Technology Development Group, Ann J. Kettle, Jessica R. Meagher