



# IMPROVING GENDER BALANCE

## Case studies

Countering gender stereotypes in schools and early years education



# Foreword

Gendered stereotypes are pervasive in our culture – ingrained by long-standing biases (both conscious and unconscious). They affect all of our expectations and, at an early age, those of our youngsters. Many of the stereotypes relate to different expectations of boys and girls. Why does this matter? First, we are losing talent. We need many more skilled professionals across all sectors. Second, there is a personal cost for young people as we limit their expectations.



We know it is possible to effect change. The Institute of Physics has led in this area for more than 10 years, and this booklet demonstrates some examples of the approaches that schools can use to improve gender balance and counter the effects of unconscious bias and gender stereotypes. I am pleased to share this work with you all.

**Professor Dame Julia Higgins**  
**FRS FREng CPhys Hon FinstP**  
President, Institute of Physics

These case studies describe some of the specific, tangible actions that practitioners involved with the project have developed to tackle gender stereotyping and its impacts in their schools and early learning and childcare centres (ELCs). Some examples will work in any setting; others will need to be adapted to your particular context. We hope you will find the ideas relevant, pragmatic and inspiring.

Please visit **[iop.org/genderbalance](https://iop.org/genderbalance)** for more information and further Improving Gender Balance (IGB) resources.

# Getting started: Staff survey

**How do you know if you need to make changes? What are staff perceptions around gender? Baseline surveys can give an overview of the current understanding within the school/ELC and point to initial actions. A secondary benefit is the discussion and reflection that they prompt.**



# Getting started: Staff survey

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) at one school was reluctant to initiate a whole-school gender balance project for two reasons. Firstly, it seemed to be a significant time commitment, and they felt it unlikely that a member of staff would volunteer to lead it. Secondly, they did not think they had much of a problem in terms of gender equality.

SLT did acknowledge that there was no baseline data to support their perceptions around gender in their organisation.

**It was agreed that a survey would be circulated to all staff to collate their views.**

Staff were asked to reflect on their perceptions of how the school deals with gender. Did they feel awareness of equality and diversity issues was high on the school's agenda? Did they feel the school was monitoring a range of data for gender balance? Did they feel gender bias is too embedded in society for schools to do anything about it?

The survey raised awareness and provoked discussion across the school. The greatest debate came from asking respondents if they agreed that "through training, policies and procedures, staff are empowered to tackle any gender-biased attitudes and behaviour they encounter in the school".

**There was little consensus between staff in terms of the support offered by the school in this area.**

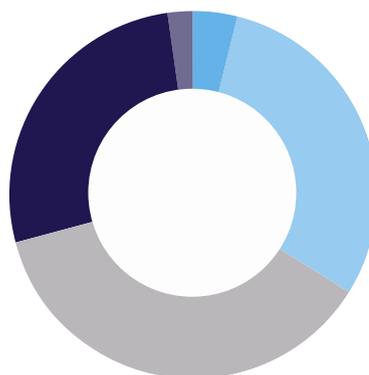
The survey also served to provide the evidence base for the next steps. After completing the survey, a member of staff was inspired to volunteer to take the project forward.

The gender-balance work has now been successfully launched in the school, and in a year's time, the same survey will be sent out again to assess progress.

## Who else could you involve?

Student and/or parent/carer surveys can also provide useful and sometimes surprising insights.

Responses from staff at this school to: "Do you agree that through training, policies and procedures, staff are empowered to tackle any gender-biased attitudes and behaviour they encounter in the school?"



- strongly agree **4%**
- agree **30%**
- neutral **37%**
- disagree **27%**
- strongly disagree **2%**

# Getting started: School policy

Staff surveys from a number of participating schools suggest that schools do not always have clear policies on gender balance, and that where they do, staff and students are not necessarily aware of them.



# Getting started: School policy

A secondary school in London wanted to tackle sexist behaviour after students reported that sexist comments by staff as well as other students were not treated seriously.

The school's equality team evaluated the existing policy for staff and student conduct, and discovered that, although it had a policy regarding racism and homophobia and a system to report incidents, **it had no equivalent policy or system for responding to sexist incidents.** In addition to making changes to the reporting system to include sexist incidents, the school provided space for teachers to discuss how they might best deal with sexist behaviour in the classroom and provided training on gender equality and gender stereotypes so staff could better understand the negative effects.

Staff and students were encouraged to speak out when incidents occurred and a designated staff member collated and responded to reports. **The system relied on genuinely open and honest dialogue with both staff and students.** Care was taken to avoid finger pointing or blaming. Issues were dealt with in a sensitive manner through dialogue and education. The presence of a policy and a system helped to give teachers some guidelines and tactics for addressing the problem with other colleagues and in the classroom.

“ There has been a really positive impact on stakeholder attitudes and empowerment. The school is now able to tackle reported incidents of sexist behaviour using a targeted approach based on data, and continues to encourage staff and students to ‘speak out and stand up’. Following on [...] the school has appointed a Director of Diversity and Equality to continue our work to promote inclusion and champion the rights of all members of the school community.”

# Communication: Whole-school staff

**Schools are busy places, and shifting a culture takes sustained effort. Planning for regular, whole-staff communication is a simple way to raise the profile of gender-balance work and gradually fix it in peoples' minds.**



# Communication: Whole-school staff

## One deputy head decided to send a weekly gender-themed email to all staff.

She had been very successful in developing strategies to encourage more girls to consider STEM at school and beyond to post-school destinations. The next step was to extend her vision for gender balance from the STEM departments to the whole school.

She needed to engage all staff, and recognised that a one-off talk or presentation was unlikely to lead to lasting change. Instead, she sends a weekly email to all staff. **The emails are succinct and light-hearted, but also intentionally include items to promote debate.**

The content is a mixture of links to articles, videos, statistics etc. She finds that she does not have to go searching for material, but usually finds enough from her own newsfeeds, the IOP resources, and discussions on the Gender Balance mailing list.

The campaign is proving particularly useful for drip-feeding information and gradually deepening staff understanding of the potential impacts on all students of gender stereotypes and unconscious bias.

She uses a mail app to track the interaction with her emails. **It tells her that people are sharing the weekly emails and are often going back to the links.**

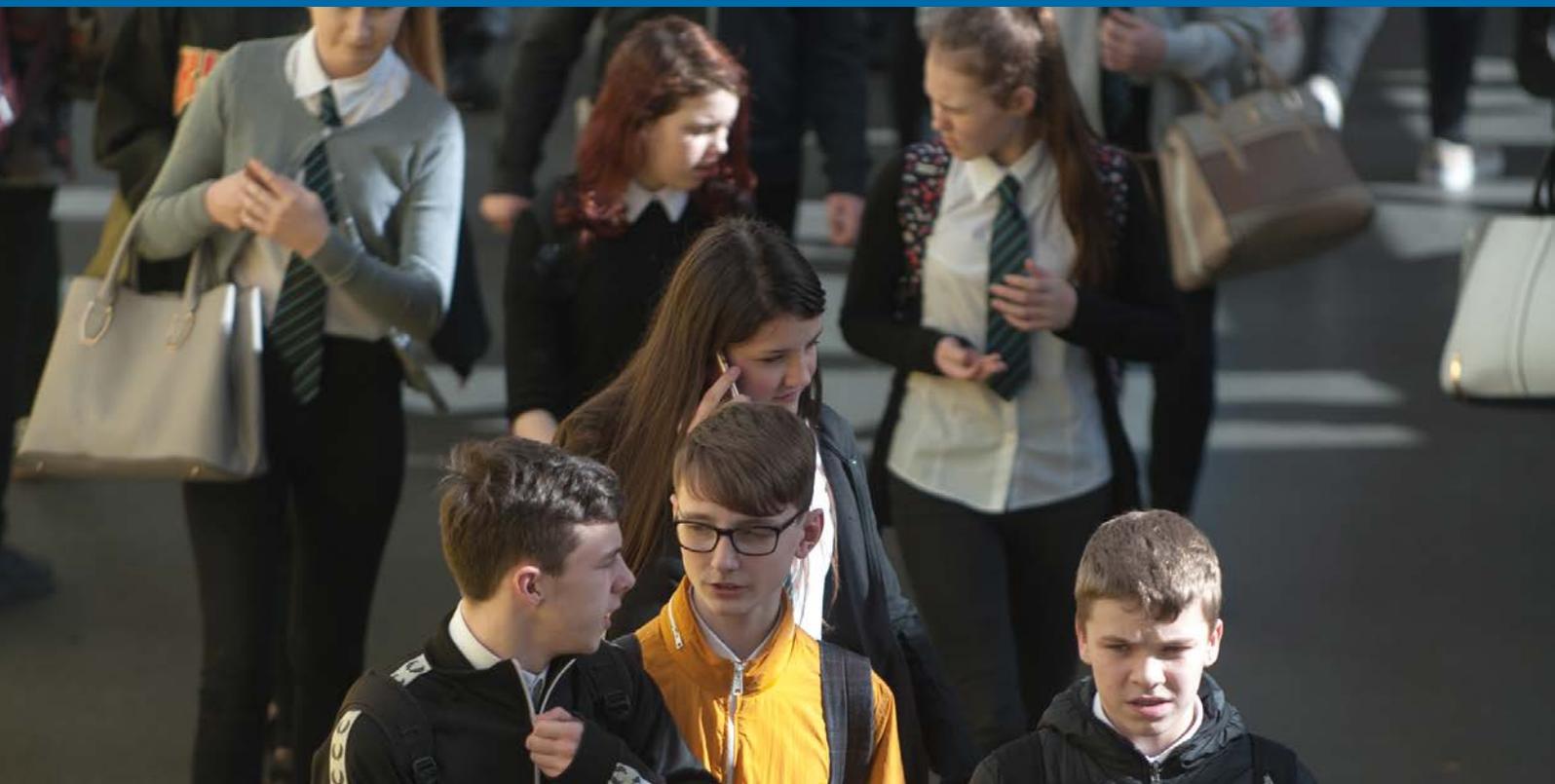
She has successfully managed to keep the profile of the project high, in a light-touch, approachable way.

### What could you send?

- “Guess the statistic” eg what proportion of primary school teachers are men? How much do top female footballers get paid compared to the top male players?
- Links to media articles about gender stereotypes
- YouTube videos about toy marketing or unconscious bias
- Get more ideas and resources from the Gender Balance mailing list at **bit.ly/GENBAL**, and IOP resources at **iop.org/genderbalance**

# **Communication: School community**

**A communications plan can keep the whole school community including senior leadership, parent council, governors (where applicable), and parents/carers informed and involved. This case study summarises examples from several centres.**



# Communication: School community

In one school, **a monthly newsletter for the SLT** provides key findings and suggests next steps for the leadership to discuss. They have found that analysing specific school data, disaggregated by gender, is especially useful to senior leadership. The data might relate to attainment, subject uptake, behaviour records, participation in extra-curricular activities etc.

The project is a **standing item on senior meeting agendas**, ensuring that all leadership is regularly updated and reminded of the ongoing work. At the end of each academic year, a member of staff working on the project presents directly to the senior leadership team.

The head of a nursery explained her approach to engaging parents in gender issues: “I changed the way I inform parents about what we do in the nursery so instead of parents choosing whether to read the board in the foyer, **I send home an email**. As part of this email, I talk about what experiences are happening in the nursery, I talk about where the learning is, and I also talk about where the parents can get involved in the learning.” Part of the learning, for her, is around gender stereotypes. To the parents, she generally raises this “in a fun, jokey manner ... but always with a message behind it”.

One early years teacher talked about their ongoing dialogue with parents/carers around what is expected of all children, irrespective of gender, at the early learning centre. “So it’s not just working with the children, **it’s working with parents and grandparents** so they understand that their thoughts could have an impact on their children.” The staff find this ongoing conversation means that parents/carers are very supportive in recognising and challenging gender stereotypes themselves.

A secondary school regularly uses its Twitter feed to point to relevant news articles. The deputy head remarked: “One of the important ways that we found of raising awareness around the whole gender balance issue, both in the school and as a whole school community, **is to use our social-media feeds**. Not just to disseminate information and celebrate things that happen in the school but also to challenge the thinking of the school community. And what has been generated is quite a decent amount of crosstalk and questions. Some of the questions have been negative, but it has certainly helped us to raise the issue across the whole school community.”

# Embedding IGB: Peer teaching

**Enlisting student groups to lead gender-balance activities can help to ensure that every class is involved and provides opportunities for peer-led learning and leadership.**



# Embedding IGB: Peer teaching

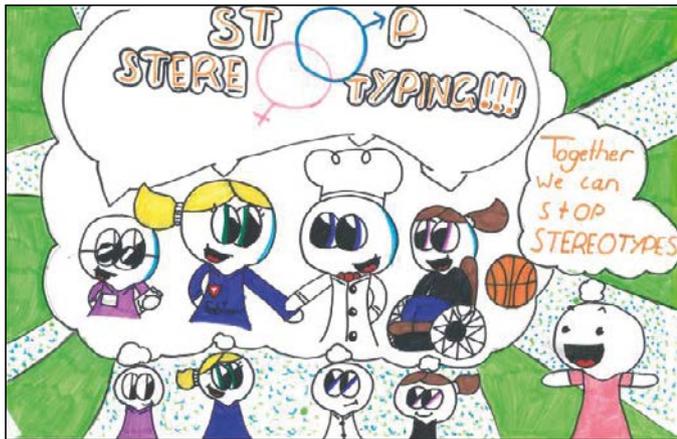
A primary school interested in involving all of their students ran an activity about gendered toy marketing, using toy advertising materials, with their pupil council. The council had representatives from every class in the school.

**Once they had completed the activity, the pupil council members agreed to plan and deliver the same activity themselves to their own classes.**

The younger children were paired with an older child for support.

The council members successfully led the lessons with their peers. In this way, every child and teacher across the school was engaged in a meaningful conversation about gender stereotypes, especially within advertising. The initial activity grew and each class produced a poster about gender awareness.

The posters were displayed around the school and provoked further conversations. Furthermore, teachers reported an increase in children challenging traditional gender stereotypes in the playground and in classroom activities.



# Embedding IGB: Literacy

**Challenging an organisation's culture needs sustained effort. Many schools are finding innovative ways to incorporate awareness of the impacts of gender stereotypes into the existing curriculum.**



# Embedding IGB: Literacy

One secondary school in Scotland revamped an existing compulsory literacy course for the 12- to 14-year-old students.

The module was to develop listening and talking skills, in part by analysing a talk.

**The teacher responsible for developing the course materials for the whole department chose to focus on female presenters**, “particularly female presenters who had interesting stories about working in male-dominated environments”.

She said she chose to do this “not so teachers had to discuss these issues [but so] teachers could if they wanted”. This was a way to ensure there was some awareness in every classroom, without adding to colleagues’ workload.

Assemblies are great for raising awareness, but may not provide the necessary long-term challenge needed for change. Optional clubs provide excellent opportunities for more sustained action, but are not attended by everyone.

A particular reason for the success of the intervention, according to the head of literacy, was because it was classroom focused.

“ We wanted to weave it into the curriculum, rather than having a one-off experience. ”

“ Particularly female presenters who had interesting stories about working in male-dominated environments. ”

## Other opportunities for gender in literacy tasks

Where do the texts you are using uphold traditional stereotypes?

What stereotypes does the book illustrate? Are they justified? Try to find and highlight counter examples, including kind, caring male characters.

Practitioners we have worked with tell us they have to plan for this initially, but that it soon becomes ingrained in their thinking and starts to happen instinctively.

# Embedding IGB: Debate lessons

**Engaging students in a discussion about gender stereotyping can be less difficult than you may think. When a teacher mentions sports prize money or that only around 11% of nurses in the NHS are men, students usually have something to say. Ensuring meaningful and fruitful debate can be more challenging.**



# Embedding IGB: Debate lessons

One school in the south of England was able to use their existing programme of regular, structured debate lessons. The programme had been running for almost five years with KS3 (ages 11–14). The format of the lessons was carefully structured and facilitated to allow for a development of ideas and to support critical thinking.

**The school decided to focus a series of five of the lessons on the theme of gender stereotyping.** Students would hopefully gain an understanding of the issues, but would also be challenged to consider strategies to promote gender balance. **Every lesson started with a stimulus. This took different formats but was mostly a single statement, graph or statistic.**

Students were given time to discuss the stimulus in small groups. They then had time to plan suggestions for the next line of debate: what questions do they have? Would they like the statistic or statement to change in the future? What strategies could they employ at a class, school, local, and national level to promote gender equality?

During whole-class discussion, different methods were used to ensure that all students could contribute, such as mini white boards, sticky notes, or throwing/holding a ball to indicate the next/current speaker.

#### Examples of stimuli:

- Statistics around gender pay gap
- Sports prize money
- Old adverts
- Word clouds of words associated with boys and girls
- Malala's fight for equal education rights in Pakistan

#### Students reported:

**100%** found the topics interesting

**87%** thought they learned new skills in the lessons (12% were undecided)

**78%** thought that the lessons made them think of things they had not thought about before

**64%** agreed that they feel more confident now (24% were undecided)

“ I say my opinion whereas in other lessons I can't always get my opinion across. In this lesson I feel comfortable because I don't feel worried about the question asked because there is no right or wrong answer. ”

# **Belonging: In a minority**

**Being in a minority in a larger group can all too easily lead to feeling deep down that you do not belong.**



# Belonging: In a minority

One school in Scotland experimented with the gender balance of their typically male-dominated S4 (age 14–16) physics teaching sets by placing all the girls in one class.

Physics is optional at this stage and, in line with national statistics, the school generally had few girls electing to take the subject. Historically, the girls attained high marks in the N5 (national Scottish) exam at the end of the year, but delving deeper, they tended to do worse in physics than in their other subjects. This again is in line with the national picture of high-attaining girls doing well in physics, but not as well as in their other subjects. And, generally, only a much smaller subset of the girls would choose to continue with physics the following year.

The school was aware of the research around the impact that being in a minority can have on one's sense of belonging, and wondered if they could address this.

The department generally had three teaching sets for this particular stage. Students would be randomly assigned

to sets, and an unintended consequence was that the few girls would be dispersed across the classes. **The school experimented with placing all the girls in one class.** There were six girls and twelve boys in the group. The two other teaching sets were therefore all boys.

Staff reported that this had an overall positive impact on the mixed class atmosphere. **The girls contributed more often in class and appeared more confident.**

In the N5 exams, they not only continued to attain high marks, but achieved in line with their other subjects. **This suggests that the negative impact of being in a minority had been challenged.**

In addition, five out of the six girls chose to continue with physics the following year – significantly more than usual for the department.

The school is repeating the experiment this year. The results seem to support the idea that a sense of belonging is important, and is negatively affected by being in a minority group. By ensuring the girls were not in such a minority, the school levelled the playing field.

**“Girls who aspire to careers in science may require considerable resilience to maintain their aspirations over time, especially knowing that they are relatively unique or unusual in this respect.”**

ASPIRES Report, *Young People's Science and Careers Aspirations 2013*

# **Belonging:** Countering self-selection in play

**Young people are susceptible to gender stereotypes from a very early age. Many children self-select out of certain activities or spaces based on their observations of what is appropriate.**



# Belonging: Countering self-selection in play

One early learning and childcare centre (ELC), aware that their block play area tended to be dominated by one group of boys, decided to carry out a short piece of action research. They experimented with putting pink into the area, using anything they had to hand such as feathers, beads, and ribbons. They did not intend this to be a long-term arrangement, but they were interested in the initial impact.

## **They report that the boys were horrified.**

It was like a line had been drawn across the entrance to the area that they could not cross. Meanwhile, some girls began to explore the area in ways they previously had not.

**It was never intended as a long-term solution, but served to highlight to the staff that the way an area is set up can have a significant impact on who interacts with it.** It also highlighted the degree to which gender stereotyping and expectations are already embedded in the children's thinking. It stimulated a lot of discussion.

The nursery staff are now trying less overt ways of changing the dynamic of this and other areas. **They are also exploring ways to encourage boys to engage with developing literacy and verbal skills.**

What subtle tweaks to different areas of the nursery might encourage more balanced engagement?

More broadly, the staff report being much more aware of their own and the children's unconscious gender biases. They are proactively challenging, for example, some boys' aversion to pink.

## **Useful links**

- Just Like a Child, Zero Tolerance  
A guide to preventing gender stereotyping in the early years, [bit.ly/Justlikeachild](https://bit.ly/Justlikeachild)
- Breaking the Mould, National Union of Teachers  
Resources to counteract gender stereotypes in early learning and primary settings, [bit.ly/Breakingthemould](https://bit.ly/Breakingthemould)
- Let Toys be Toys  
A campaign to stop limiting children's interests by promoting some toys and books as only suitable for girls, and others only for boys, [lettoysbetoys.org.uk](https://lettoysbetoys.org.uk)

# **Belonging:** Countering self-selection in clubs

**Optional clubs are, by their very nature, self-selecting. This is often acceptable, but are there ways to broaden participation?**



# Belonging: Countering self-selection in clubs

One secondary school in Scotland was keen to find ways to enable all their students to experience the fun and reward of STEM challenges but found that asking for volunteers meant a lot of the young people ruled themselves out.

“ We’ve had a long tradition of having a science club that has been very successful and won awards, and various extra-curricular activities. But, when we look at who engages, **it tends to be the same self-selecting group of pupils**. We realised that a number of our pupils were very, very good, had the right skills to do well at these sort of events and would enjoy them, but wouldn’t go to the traditional lunchtime or after-school clubs to take part.

One of our approaches was to select a large STEM challenge (Shell’s The Bright Ideas Challenge) and run it for the whole of S2 (age 12–14). **Every S2 pupil got to take part in it and then only after they’d all experienced it did we ask for groups of volunteers to continue with it further.** We ended up with mixed gender groups, which we wouldn’t normally have had. Speaking to the girls who had been involved, they wouldn’t have volunteered normally to take part. It gave them the opportunity to experience STEM in action. ”

## **Belonging: Peer ambassadors**

**Many schools see the benefits of using older students to act as ambassadors/mentors to younger students. This case study gathers insights from a number of schools. Most of the examples here are from secondary schools linking with local primary schools.**



# Belonging: Peer ambassadors

Make it broader than just one subject – we recruited **senior girls to lead STEM activities, and senior boys to lead on literacy activities**, with our associated primary schools. All activities were for all primary pupils, and we did not make a fuss about the gender of the ambassadors – but wanted to quietly provide counter-stereotype role models for the younger children.

Explicitly invite students who may not otherwise consider the club.

Teachers were asked to select at least 50% female students [for science activities] and encourage those that are perhaps lacking in confidence.

Introduce the project through assemblies or talks in class.

## IOP Ambassador training workshops

Three workshops to build students' resilience, explore fixed and growth mindsets, and develop creative thinking skills and communication skills. Available to download at [bit.ly/IGBtraining](http://bit.ly/IGBtraining)

Primary schools were very keen to be involved [with the ambassador programme], but it was difficult making contact initially. **Now, links are stronger between associated schools and the high school.**

It was really important that we spent **time training the ambassadors**, not just in the activities, but in communication, working in teams, creativity, problem solving etc. We made time to practise these skills. We also spent time covering ideas like unconscious bias, stereotyping and growth mindsets.

**Let students choose and develop their outreach activity.** A lot of their commitment came during the creative process, being trusted with responsibility, working together.

As well as developing skills, it was important to have a purpose and deadline eg a showcase evening with a speaker and activities, or dates to run sessions in the local primary school.

**After the training day**, the students worked in two groups to develop two workshops on the theme of space. They visited a local primary school to run their workshops for two classes each. Running the workshop twice gave the students the opportunity to reflect on what had worked well and what they wanted to change for the second workshop.

The students chose activities to run at a science fair for the public put on by the university. During this event they spoke to families and explained the science behind their activities. **They talked to hundreds of visitors, meaning they could refine their explanations and adapt them for different visitors.**

# Challenging perceptions: Who does STEM?

**It can be hard to relate the school curriculum to the experience of conducting genuine, original research. Allowing students to lead their own STEM research can develop their academic resilience, and is one inspiring way to increase understanding of, and interest, in STEM.**



# Challenging perceptions: Who does STEM?

One secondary school in London recruited a group of 12 KS4 (age 14–16) girls to an after-school science research project.

Their particular task was to collect data about the radiation types and levels in soil across the UK. So far they have collected and been sent samples from all across the UK and are hoping to receive more samples from members of the public. As well as improving their understanding of radioactivity, they took genuine ownership of their work, planning and leading it themselves.

They presented to large audiences, wrote articles for scientific journals, and felt

the thrill of the potential for making new scientific discoveries.

The project also impacted their long-term attitudes towards STEM.

Initially, only one student was considering a STEM A-level (in line with national trends), but after involvement with this project, all but one chose STEM A-levels.

These 12 girls are now mentoring students from the year below to continue the project.

## **Institute for Research in Schools (IRIS)**

The students used a CERN@school detector available through IRIS.

These authentic research booklets highlight a wide range of other opportunities for learners to conduct original scientific research.

Scottish version  
[bit.ly/authenticScotland](https://bit.ly/authenticScotland)

English version  
[bit.ly/authenticEngland](https://bit.ly/authenticEngland)

“ I was able to do my own investigations – it isn't as scary as it first seemed. I also gained a sense of adventure and realised that getting things wrong is a part of science. It is a major reason why I study physics A-level now. ”

“ [The project] gave me confidence to speak publicly. This is something that I would never have done previously – but the research has allowed me to feel like the expert in the room. ”

# Challenging perceptions: Subject choice and gender

**Our perception of what we are good at and what we enjoy comes clouded by so many other influences, expectations and pressures.**



# Challenging perceptions: Subject choice and gender

A secondary school in North East England was keen to encourage all students to consider STEM subjects and post-school destinations. They felt it was important to allow pupils to experience STEM activities, but that it was also necessary to find ways to actively challenge perceptions of who STEM is 'for'.

The school ran a weekly extracurricular club for 14- to 16-year-olds. It attracted a mix of students, although predominantly girls. The two strands (gender and STEM) started quite separately.

**Students engaged in a range of activities exploring stereotypes, unconscious bias, stereotype threat, and growth mindsets. In conjunction, they carried out some practical STEM activities.**

Care was taken to ensure that these were linked to a context to ensure that the students could see relevance, and were structured to increase resilience and confidence.

The strands evolved to become more combined. For example, the students used what they had learned from both elements to critique a range of campaigns to encourage girls into STEM.

The students were given a chance to plan and lead their own research projects. One group chose to carry out observational research in their lessons.

**They focused on questioning in the classroom and their data highlighted gender differences both in the way students were asked and how they answered questions.**

The SLT at the school invited the students to present their findings at a staff meeting. Having the opportunity to lead their own

research and present to staff helped build the students' confidence in their own abilities, as well as their understanding of gender equality. It had a significant impact on the senior leadership to hear about the impact of unconscious bias in the classroom directly from students.

## Resources for getting started:

- **IGB lesson plans**

A set of lesson plans to introduce students to the concepts of gender stereotyping and unconscious bias, and equip them with tools to overcome their effects. [bit.ly/IGBpshe](http://bit.ly/IGBpshe)

- **Practical Action STEM challenges**

A range of different STEM challenges, with varied global contexts. [practicalaction.org/stem-1](http://practicalaction.org/stem-1)

# Challenging perceptions: Career information

**Most young people are unaware of the breadth of job opportunities available to them.**



# Challenging perceptions: Career information

A biology department in Edinburgh has made awareness of careers a focus for this year's department development plan. **For each topic taught, they produce one slide about a career relevant to that topic.** To ensure coverage of the curriculum for every year group, each teacher produces about one slide per week, which they feel is manageable.

The slides, which include a guide salary, working hours, job specification and topic links, are then incorporated into the teaching resources for that week.

They have made a conscious effort to include **a range of skills levels** in their chosen careers and to make sure the images reflect the diverse workforce.

Another school was keen to tackle their existing gender imbalance in the uptake of science at GCSE (age 14).

Following the guidance of the IOP Top 10 Tips for Inclusive Science Teaching poster, they decided to actively and regularly "refer to a range of careers that use science-based skills".

**They set up a career of the week page on the school intranet, with a different job every week.** The jobs were also discussed in tutor time, and included in the science department's scheme of work. There was a deliberate variety in the jobs chosen, to

highlight the breadth of possibilities that science offers. The intervention did seem to have a positive impact on the gender balance of the uptake of science courses on offer.

“ In terms of feedback from pupils, we're getting great responses! We all explained to the students that our objective in showing these slides was to broaden their knowledge of careers, as we didn't want them thinking that biology was simply about becoming a doctor, dentist or vet. ”

**Top 10 Tips for Inclusive Science Teaching: [bit.ly/IGBtentips](https://bit.ly/IGBtentips)**

**Useful links for job descriptions and information:**

- [www.icould.com](http://www.icould.com)
- [www.myworldofwork.co.uk](http://www.myworldofwork.co.uk)

# Challenging perceptions: Supporting choices

**Student subject choices can be affected by preconceptions of what a subject will be like and what jobs it might lead to. How can schools enable students to make well-informed decisions?**



# Challenging perceptions: Supporting choices

One school in Fife realised that the subject choice booklets were potentially a powerful mechanism, but to achieve their purpose, they needed a revamp.

At every point of choice, students receive a booklet with details of the subjects available, criteria for gaining access to the course, and details of the curriculum content and assessment methods. These booklets tend to be repetitive, as most subjects have broadly similar entry requirements and exam structure. **The school wanted to re-assess the purpose of the booklets, what information was presented, and the language used.**

“ We decided to rewrite subject choice booklets with students (and parents) in mind. Focus on what they really need to know and remove any unnecessary jargon. ”

The booklet now starts with overview information, and faculties agreed a common format for subject-specific information, focusing on skills and possible future pathways. **What skills might students who enjoy this subject have? What specific skills will this subject develop?** The final section focuses on the breadth of specific job opportunities related to that subject.

“ The booklet is much more engaging for us now. ”



Link to the booklet:  
<https://joom.ag/BJQY>

# **Challenging perceptions: Providing information**

**Subject teachers are often asked for advice, but are not always able to give specific, up-to-date information.**



# Challenging perceptions: Providing information

Staff in a school physics department felt that it was very important to increase their own knowledge to be in a better position to give objective, impartial advice, based on current, up-to-date information.

**They chose to spend development time gathering information to improve their own understanding of alternative paths using their subject.** They used career resources from the Institute of Physics, information from UCAS, and UCAS/A-level option word clouds.

At the next careers evening, teachers were in a much stronger position to offer useful, relevant advice. Students were asked about plans (if any) after school, and possible A-level choices.

Some students had specific careers in mind, and were unsure whether physics would be useful. Staff were able to help them recognise the skills developed in physics and match to those required.

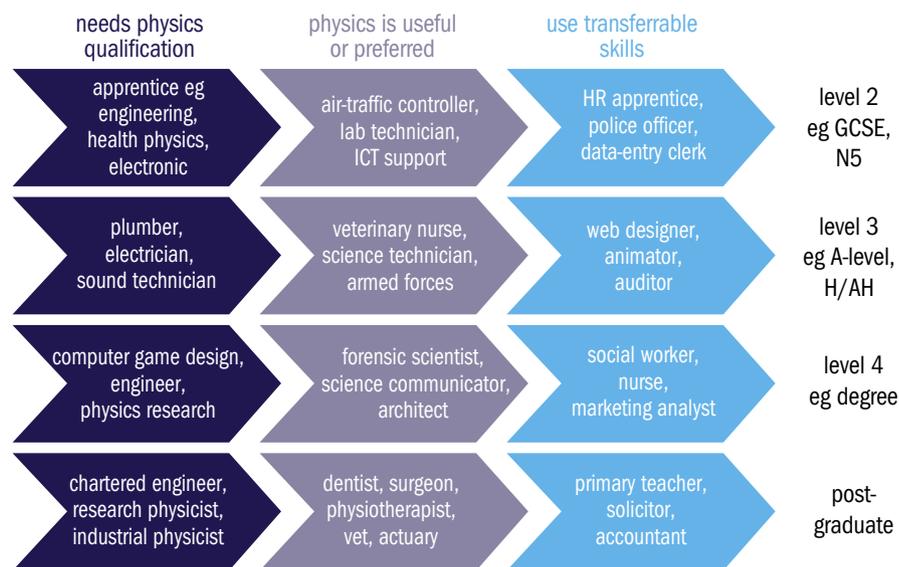
A few students had high aspirations, but not the required qualifications for traditional entry paths. Staff were able to describe alternative routes to competitive jobs. A completed example of the Funnel activity from “Exploring Physics Uncovering

Choice” was particularly useful, and could be adapted for other subjects.

Having literature on hand to take away meant that students and parents could investigate further in their own time.

“ Students were interested in their own futures and grateful for specific, personalised information.”

## Example: careers in **or** from physics



Based on Exploring Physics Uncovering Choice Funnel Activity [bit.ly/careersfunnel](http://bit.ly/careersfunnel)

The Improving Gender Balance (IGB) project aims to support schools to understand gender stereotyping and its impacts. We work with teaching staff, support staff, and senior leaders across early learning and childcare centres (ELCs), primary schools, and secondary schools. Our programme is school-led and evidence-based.

Gender stereotypes shape self-perception, affect wellbeing and attitudes to relationships and influence participation in the world of work. In a school environment they can affect a young person's classroom experience, academic performance and subject choice. Stereotypes can have a negative impact on both boys and girls.

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