

For immediate release

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Leicester students win big in national physics competition

Four schoolgirls from Leicester have been announced as the winners of a national competition from the Institute of Physics – scooping £1000 for themselves and £250 for their school, Avanti Fields School, Leicester.

Prarthana Shukla (13), Anaiya Dattani (13), Serena Varia (13) and Dhariti Raythathatha (13), all in year eight, have won the first annual *Eurekas* – a competition that saw students aged 11-16 across the UK and Ireland take up the challenge to answer the question: what's the point of physics?

Baking a cake in the shape of a cochlear implant, the group impressed the expert judges by delving into the physics behind the devices helping so many people communicate every day, scoring top marks for originality and creativity, quality, relevance and spirit. The judging panel included journalist, broadcaster and physicist Shivani Dave, author and physicist Femi Fadugba and Rachel Youngman, Deputy Chief Executive at the IOP.

Five runners-up were also chosen, each winning £250 for their school. Runner up entries included:

- A piece of art explaining the physics behind glasses help manage dyslexia, submitted by Isla Casey (11), Weetwood Primary School, Leeds.
- A mechanical generator capable of powering an LED, submitted by Stefan Cuitac (12), Sutton Grammar School, Sutton.
- A piece of digital art showcasing the physics of our universe, submitted by Emily Kelt (16), Craigmount High School, Edinburgh
- A video that explains how solar power is generated, submitted by Amit Chandran (16), Shaantanu Lyengar (16) and Vedant Shirude (16), King Edwards VI Five Ways School, Birmingham

Whether arty, sporty, musical or into literature, languages or sciences, the judges were looking for submissions from students with a range of interests – not just those already interested in physics. *The Eurekas* is an initiative by Limit Less – an Institute of Physics campaign designed to broaden and diversify the range of young people going on to study physics after the age of 16 by getting students to see physics differently.

Winner Dhariti, said: “We were over the moon when we found out. I wasn't a fan of physics and science isn't my strong point but after researching this project it's definitely more interesting and something I would do going further.”

Winner Serena, said: “I wasn't a big fan of physics at the start because I found it mostly theory based but after taking part in this competition, I realise now that physics is really very creative. I think it is something I would like to do going further.”

Avanti Fields School, said: “We are grateful for this opportunity given by the Institute of Physics - you have truly inspired our pupils to look at physics differently.”

Rachel Youngman, Deputy Chief Executive, Institute of Physics, said: “We were all incredibly impressed by the quality of entries submitted for this first year of *The Eureka*s. It was amazing to see how the young people tapped into their passions and produced such thoughtful work. We wanted this competition to be a celebration of creativity, culture, collaboration, diversity and activity – all underpinned by physics themes – and it has certainly achieved this. Our thanks go to every single young person that took part, and I’m already excited to see what next year’s competition brings!”

Shivani Dave, said: “The standard of entries was incredibly high, it was wonderful to see so many people find their interpretation of the starting question 'what's the point of physics' and really let their creativity flow. If these entries are anything to go by, the next generation of physicists are going to achieve some incredible things. I was so honoured to judge, everyone should be incredibly proud of what they submitted.”

Femi Fadugba, said: “The incredible quality of each submission made the selection process as painful as it was rewarding! Ambitious, imaginative, and beautiful, this stuff - the future of physics is bright.”

*The Eureka*s was launched after it was revealed parents who did not enjoy physics at school may be unwittingly putting their children off the subject and could be contributing to the diversity problem faced by the profession. 46% of parents describe physics at school as ‘complicated’, a third say it’s ‘difficult’ and only 17% say it’s ‘creative’, according to results of a survey* of 3,000 parents, commissioned by the Institute of Physics (IOP).

With nearly 9,000 physics-related job vacancies in the UK in mid-2021†, there are significant skills gaps at all levels. Women are particularly underrepresented in the physics community – but their talent, insights and perspectives are badly needed if society is to solve the challenges facing healthcare, the environment and the economy.

-ENDS-

Notes to editors

For more information, please contact The Eureka

s team at Barley Communications:
Sam Verrinder: sam.verrinder@barleycommunications.co.uk / 07931 217863

Caroline Narboni: caroline.narboni@barleycommunications.co.uk / 07803 049768

*Censuswide survey of 3,007 parents of children aged 5-16, June-July 2020

† IOP Workforce Skills Project, 2021

About Limit Less and The Eureka

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The physics community does not look like the wider society it is in. There are too few women; too few Black physicists, especially of Black Caribbean descent; too few people with disabilities; too few LGBTQ+ people; and too few people from less well off or disadvantaged backgrounds. The Limit Less campaign is the IOP’s commitment to make a generational change by removing the barriers to young people seeing physics as not for everyone – and not for them. More information about the campaign can be found at www.iop.org/LimitLess.

*The Eureka*s competition is part of Limit Less and is designed to broaden and diversify the range of young people going on to study physics after the age of 16, by appealing to young people who tend to view physics as not for them. You can read more about the competition [here](#).