

Date: 6 October

Embargo: 00:30 hours, 7 October 2021

Whole School Equity Plans lead to positive change, say teachers

But more work needs to be done, says the Institute of Physics

Eighty per cent of teachers across the UK and Ireland say that their school has in place a whole school equity plan, a survey published today (7th October) reveals. Three-quarters of those teachers believe that implementation of the plan has led to positive changes in their school.

However, this leaves a significant 20% of teachers saying their school is without an equity plan or that they are unaware of one.

A whole school equity plan shows that a school is committed to meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. It aims to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity in areas such as disability, sex and sexual orientation, race, religion and belief.

The Institute of Physics (IOP) commissioned the survey as part of its Limit Less campaign, designed to encourage a much broader range of young people to study physics. Evidence suggests that at present hurdles such as the elitist image of physics means students from several social groups believe that studying the subject is simply 'not for them'. The IOP is calling for a plan in every school as one of the ways of tackling this.

The IOP is also publishing today six reports that look at the stereotypes and barriers students face in schools across the UK and Ireland, including at the formative early years and primary stages. They each invite teachers to get behind the IOP's manifesto for change that urges the education sector to do more to ensure that no child is excluded from taking physics because of who they are. The IOP has identified five underrepresented and underserved groups:

- Girls
- Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Disabled young people
- LGBT+ young people
- Young people of Black Caribbean descent.

Rachel Youngman, Deputy Chief Executive of the IOP, said:

“Through its Limit Less campaign, the IOP intends to support young people to change the world and fulfil their potential by doing physics.

“We know that young people, now more than ever, are desperately keen to be involved in finding the solutions to the world’s problems. Climate change, energy and food supply are just a few of the challenges we face where physics has a key role to play. So it cannot be right that many young people still receive the message that studying physics, with all the opportunities it provides to be part of solving these and many other challenges, is not for them. Whole school equity plans are a positive way of ensuring that all subjects are open to all students as required by the 2010 Equality Act. It’s great to see from our survey that so many schools have a whole school equity plan in place, and that so many teachers are seeing their benefit.

“However, it’s worrying that a fifth of teachers are telling us that their school has no such plan, or that they are unaware of one. So we are calling on the governments and education authorities of the UK and Ireland to redouble efforts to ensure that every school introduces and implements one of these vital initiatives.

“The teaching profession getting behind our manifesto for change is one way to encourage governments to move faster in ensuring that all schools provide an equitable and inclusive environment for all.”

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. A whole school equity plan ensures that the entire school community – including parents, carers, students, staff and teachers – are all involved in ensuring that equity and inclusion are embedded across the school. This includes the curriculum and the ‘hidden’ curriculum; during recreation time and extracurricular activities; in policies and in guidelines; ensuring a positive and inclusive community for all. Every school should be working to make sure it is open and inclusive for all, but each school’s policy/plan should be written to reflect their establishment’s characteristics. To make sure all underrepresented and underserved groups have a voice, the plan should be a collaboration between school staff, students and parents.
2. An IOP video about a whole school equity plan can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YbKGIZ6vnqQ>
3. The IOP commissioned Censuswide consultants to survey 2000 teachers in the UK and Ireland in September 2021. Respondents were evenly divided between the primary and secondary sectors.
4. The IOP has published a schools report for each of the four UK nations, and Ireland, plus a general report for early years/primary schools. The IOP School Reports can be seen at <https://iop.org/WholeSchool>
5. The IOP manifesto for change can be seen at <https://campaign.iop.org/manifesto>
6. For information about the IOP’s Limit Less campaign, <https://iop.org/LimitLess>
7. For more information contact James Rebbeck: james.rebbeck@iop.org or call 07909 570826.