A young girl with a purple headband, wearing a white collared shirt and a blue school jacket, is smiling broadly while looking through the eyepiece of a white microscope. The background is a bright, clean laboratory or classroom setting. The text 'Partnership Grants impact summary' is overlaid in the top right corner.

Partnership Grants impact summary

Partnership Grants impact summary

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This report can be viewed at:

royalsociety.org/partnership-grants-impact-summary

Cover image: Student at Horfield C of E Primary School, a 2021 grant awardee.

Foreword

The Royal Society has long advocated for the place of practical activity at the heart of science education because it is integral to the practice of science and to training scientists of the future. However, as the Royal Society's *Science education tracker* has shown, access to hands-on practical science has steadily declined over the past decade, a trend accelerated by the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, it is now more likely that young people will be asked to watch a video of a practical than to participate in practical work themselves.

Running for over 25 years, the Partnership Grants scheme aims to provide opportunities for young people and their teachers to carry out investigative science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) projects in partnership with STEM professionals. The STEM professionals provide career role models. The projects are innovative, going beyond reproduction of a known result. Through these projects students can develop key skills and everyone, irrespective of their backgrounds, can benefit and contribute to scientific and technological progress. This independent external evaluation carried out by Dr Laura R Meagher and colleagues demonstrates that the scheme is addressing this key aim.

In this summary report we highlight the key findings from the evaluation and impacts for students, teachers and STEM partners. The findings show the positive effects that the skills and impact developed undertaking practical work can have on students, including an increase in confidence in their STEM ability and understanding of STEM careers, and the wider importance of the scientific method.

It is also encouraging to see that as well as supporting practical work through the funded investigations, three quarters of teachers had either experienced or started to see evidence of increased support for STEM or practical science within their schools or colleges.

The Partnership Grants scheme will continue to support schools and colleges with practical work, and the necessary equipment, to provide invaluable experience in carrying out discovery science and developing the skills valued by researchers and employers. It will also take into consideration the recommendations put forward by the evaluators to ensure the scheme is as inclusive and accessible as possible for both schools and colleges and STEM partners.



Professor Gerry Gilmore FRS
Chair of the Partnership Grants Allocating Panel

Background

The Partnership Grants scheme is the Royal Society's flagship grant for UK schools and colleges. In 2025 an external evaluation was commissioned to look at the medium to long term impacts of the scheme.

The evaluation reviewed feedback from 141 lead teachers, 88 STEM partners and 50 Head teachers / Principals and senior management via survey, as well as a select number of in-depth online interviews, and a review of reporting submitted by teachers and STEM partners at the end of their grant work over the past seven years. This impact summary features a selection of the data from that report.

The official addendum summary of the external evaluation can be accessed at:

royalsociety.org/partnership-grants-impact-summary

Below:

Students and lead teacher at Horfield C of E Primary School involved in their ongoing STEM club.



Partnership Grant overview

The Royal Society's Partnership Grants scheme funds UK schools and colleges up to £3,000 to work in partnership with STEM professionals from academia or industry.

Through the grant students undertake an investigative STEM project within their school or college with support from their teachers and the STEM professionals. The scheme is open to all levels of education, supporting students aged between 5 – 18, and supports projects in all areas of STEM, with cross-disciplinary and cross-curricular projects encouraged.

As of January 2026, over 400 projects have been funded since 2018, with over 1,400 projects awarded funding and an estimated 170,000 students supported since 2000.

To find out more about the Partnership Grants, visit royalsociety.org/partnership

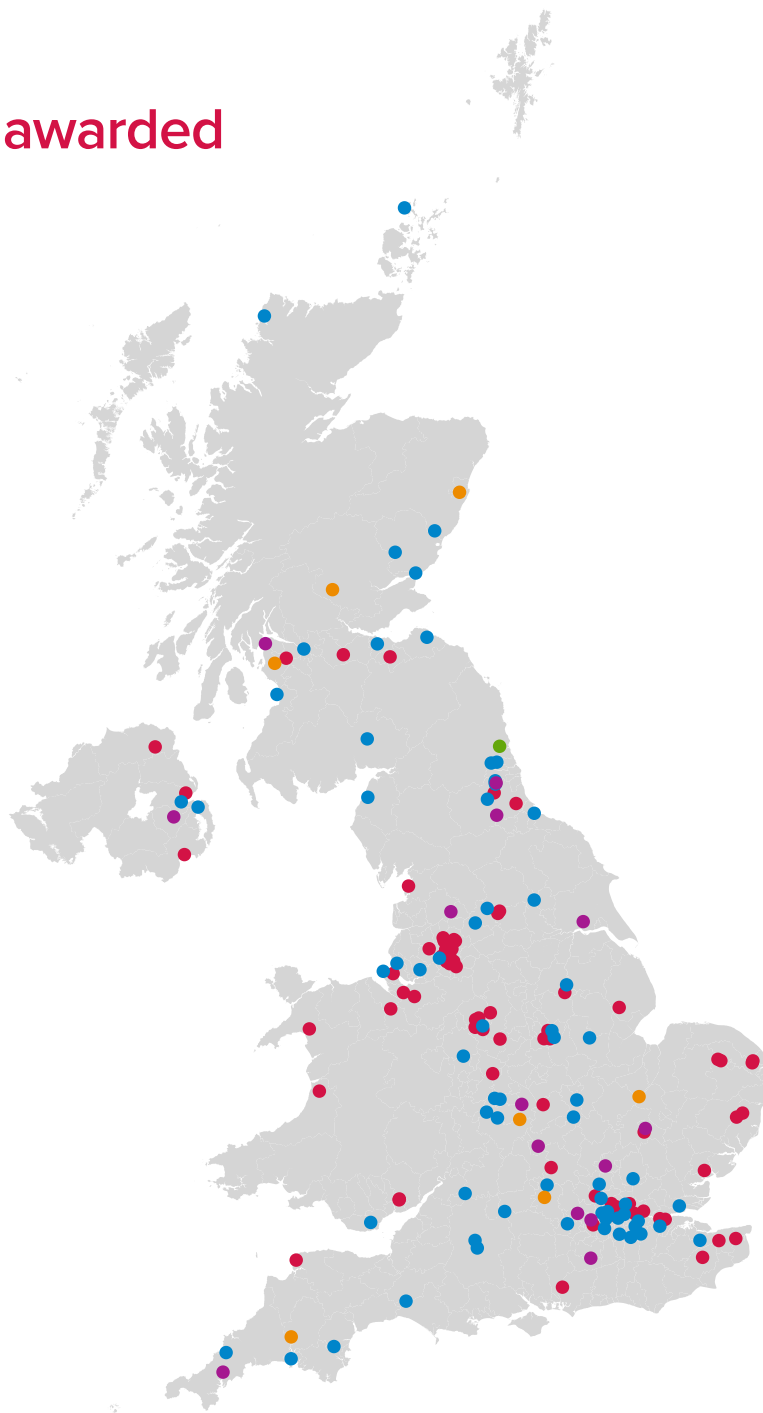
The five strategic aims of the scheme are:

1. To support teachers, schools and colleges to undertake, embed and sustain more practical science and original investigative projects with students to support curriculum learning.
2. To support more young people from underrepresented groups to have equitable access to take part in, and benefit from, investigative STEM projects.
3. To develop and equip young people with the key skills they need for the future.
4. To engage and inspire more young people to further their education in STEM, from school through to university or technical vocation / apprenticeship.
5. To provide pathways for STEM partners/professionals to boost their outreach skills and share their work with different school-based audiences and support their professional status.

Partnership Grants awarded 2023 – 2025

KEY

- Primary
- Secondary
- All-through school
- Middle school
- Sixth form and further education colleges





Left:
Students at Walton High School, Milton Keynes.
A Partnership Grant seed grant school.

Below:
STEM partner engaging with students at grant holder school in Bristol.

.....
“What I felt this really did was create that equity amongst everybody... And in terms of the disadvantaged children, I think the biggest impact was seeing that their aspiration was raised following this project and that idea that, you know, ‘it could be me.’”
Grant lead teacher
.....



Student impact

The Partnership Grants aims to support young people in developing the key skills they need for the future, and to inspire more young people to further their education in STEM. The scheme also looks to be as inclusive as possible, supporting more young people from underrepresented groups to have equitable access to investigative STEM projects.

The external evaluation showed that the Partnership Grants scheme supports nearly all students involved aged 5 – 18 to develop key STEM skills, gaining a clearer understanding of the scientific process and increasing confidence.

The scheme was also shown to support teachers in illustrating how STEM skills can support future careers with most teachers reporting that the students had a better understanding of STEM career opportunities through the grant activity.

The Partnership Grants scheme was shown to support a wide range of students engaging in practical investigative STEM activities. A quarter of the schools who responded had high levels of disadvantaged pupils. 87% of lead teachers and 90% of Head teachers and Principals believed that the diversity of students engaged by the grant projects reflected the school's diversity.

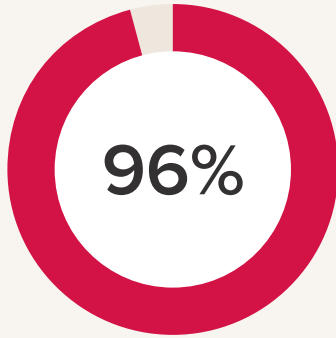
The vast majority of lead teachers felt that the Partnership Grant scheme helped them to advance embedding practical science in schools; widening participation in STEM subjects; enabling more disadvantaged groups to participate in STEM activities; ensuring that students age 5 – 18 are able to develop key STEM skills for broader future career choices and complementing other STEM school engagement activities in the UK.

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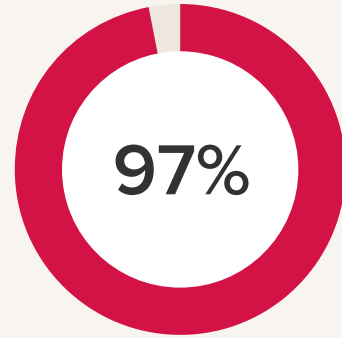
“The Partnership Grants scheme has left a significant legacy at our school... The collaboration with STEM partners has boosted our students’ confidence, encouraging them to pursue STEM-related studies and careers.”

Grant lead teacher

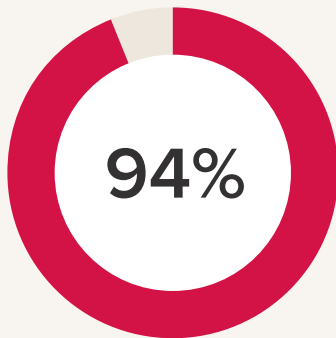
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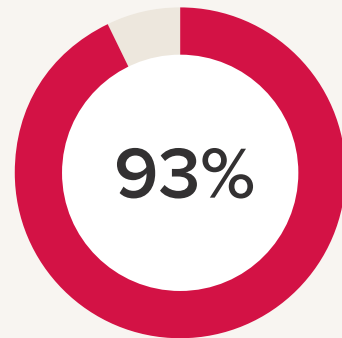
of teachers reported an increase in students' key skills.



of teachers saw an increase of understanding of the investigative scientific process.



of teachers saw increased confidence in their students' STEM ability.



of teachers reported students gained a greater understanding of STEM career opportunities.

School and college staff impact

The Partnership Grants aims to support teachers, schools and colleges to undertake, embed and sustain more practical science and original investigative projects with students to support curriculum learning.

From the external evaluation we can see that teachers gain confidence in running practical science lessons, and that this increased confidence is most evident in early career teachers.

We also see that the large majority of schools and colleges go on to embed elements of the practical STEM work undertaken in the project into the school's wider curriculum providing new and more hands-on opportunities, impacting more students in the future.

The opportunity to build a relationship with a STEM partner was singled out by teachers as one of several distinctive or particularly valuable features of the scheme.

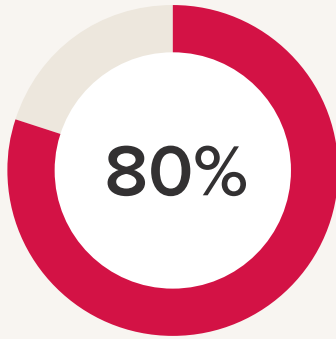
Many schools and colleges reported that they would be continuing to use equipment purchased with the grant funding in future years, for continued project work and other activity within the school.



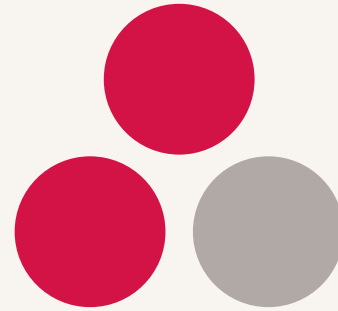
.....
"It has altered our long-term curriculum planning and the hands-on STEM opportunities we provide our pupils."
Teacher
.....

Left:
Teacher supporting students' practical investigation at Walton High School.

Three quarters of teachers had either experienced, or started to see evidence of, increased support for STEM or practical science within their schools or colleges, often from colleagues and senior leaders.



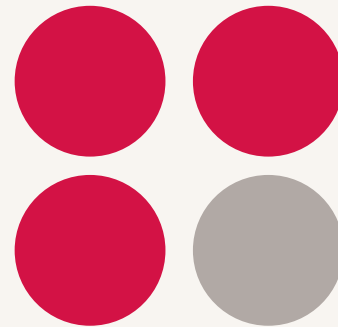
of teachers and headteachers stated elements of the project were embedded in the school's wider curriculum.



Two out of three teachers surveyed, reported increased confidence in running practical science lessons.



Many schools reported lasting use of equipment purchased with grants.



Three out of four teachers saw, or had early evidence of, an increase in support for STEM or practical science.

Impact on STEM Professionals

The Partnership Grants aims to provide a way for STEM professionals (known as STEM partners within the grant) to boost their outreach skills and share their work with different school and college-based audiences, as well as supporting their professional status.

The external evaluation showed that the partnership between school and college staff and STEM partners was seen as successful, often with positive implications for the future.

Nearly all STEM partners (93%) viewed the partnership with the school or college partner as a success, and nearly all (93%) felt the project had had a positive impact on themselves.

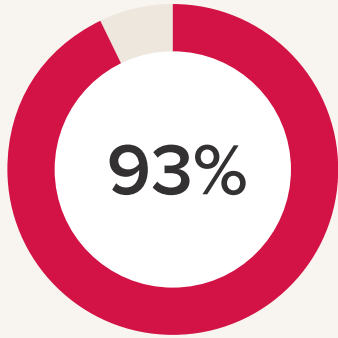
The evaluation found that the great majority (~90%) of STEM partners had gained new insights into school-level education and the practicalities of running engagement projects, with well over three-quarters of STEM partners having gained skills in engaging students and communicating about research. Both of these could be seen as boding well for any future engagement efforts they might develop.

Just under two-thirds of STEM partners had their organisation recognising the value of the work they did via the Partnership Grant.

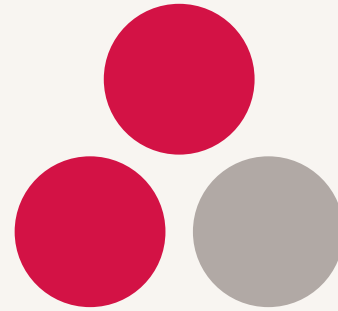
Around two thirds of teachers expected that their partnership with their STEM partner(s) would continue in some form in the future, with the majority (86%) of lead teachers saying that, due to the project, they personally are more willing to participate in other STEM partnerships (even with other partners); and that their school or college is more willing to do so as well (84%).

Opposite:

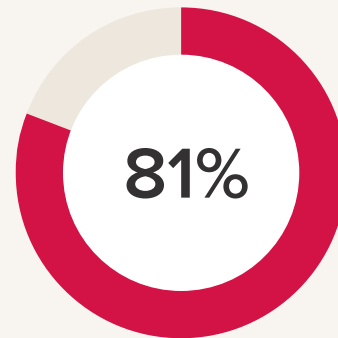
Students and technician at Walton High School.



agreed that participation in the project had a positive impact on them.



Two out of three respondents expect the partnership with STEM professionals to continue.



of STEM partners gained new skills in engaging students and communicating about research.

How to apply

To apply for a Partnership Grant, UK schools and colleges should complete an online application form, at:

royalsociety.org/partnership

The form opens in February each year and closes at the start of December. When applying, a school or college will need support from a lead STEM partner and their Head teacher / Principal to complete the application form. Find out more about the application process, eligibility, and STEM partner engagement at: **royalsociety.org/partnership**

Need some inspiration?

Explore project plans and case studies at:

royalsociety.org/grants/partnership-grants/case-studies

Supporting you through the application process

We run regular, no-obligation, online sessions for those wanting to find out more about the scheme, sharing tips on how to apply and giving the opportunity to answer your questions. Sign-up at: **portal.royalsociety.org/events**

Our team are also available if you would prefer to speak to them directly for feedback on your application before submission, technical support, or guidance on specific queries.

T +44 20 7451 2531

E education@royalsociety.org

Right:

Students at Horfield C of E Primary School engaged in practical investigations in their STEM club.





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Tomorrow's climate scientists

Tomorrow's climate scientists is an extension to the Partnership Grants scheme and funds schools and colleges specifically researching into climate change and biodiversity. The programme aims to give students not just a voice but an opportunity to take action themselves to address local climate and biodiversity issues.

If you are keen to be involved, please follow the general guidance for the Partnership Grants scheme, and develop a project in a topic around local climate change and biodiversity challenges.

The Royal Society

The Royal Society is a self-governing Fellowship of many of the world's most distinguished scientists drawn from all areas of science, engineering, and medicine. The Society's fundamental purpose, as it has been since its foundation in 1660, is to recognise, promote, and support excellence in science and to encourage the development and use of science for the benefit of humanity.

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