



## CHANGING TIMES FOR PRIMARY SCIENCE



Teachers participate in CPD at a Science Learning Centre

### *A digest from **Zoe Crompton** of the views of the network of Science Learning Centres on the proposed new primary curriculum for science in England*

**F**or the last four years, the UK network of Science Learning Centres has been supporting primary teachers to engage children in exciting practical science activities and make relevant links to real-life contexts and other subjects across the curriculum. We have provided continuing professional development (CPD) through a range of courses and events organised with clusters of schools and local authorities.

The proposed new primary curriculum for England embraces the principles of good science teaching – being investigative, hands-on and promoting thinking. So in theory science will remain central to children's learning. Helen, a recent participant at a Science Learning Centre event, agrees:

*I think that science sits at the heart of the new curriculum because science is in itself an enquiry-based subject that you can link and use across the curriculum. I have always thought that science is about thinking skills and that it is an approach as well as a subject.*

However, there is a danger

that science will not remain high on school agendas as important in its own right. Another participant, Jane, shares this view:

*I am concerned that science has been taken away as a core subject, as on the one hand the Government is saying we need more people in science and industry and on the other hand they are saying we are going to take away the focus on science in primary schools when we have been working so hard to raise standards.*

A lot of misinformation surrounding the Rose review has been surfacing in schools and we are keen to make sure that teachers are clear about the implications for science. A document has gone out to all primary schools outlining the myths and opportunities relating to the proposed new primary curriculum; this document can be downloaded from the SLC or ASE websites (see end).

Removing the straitjacket of science SATs will have a positive impact, provided teachers have enough time to dedicate to science. Jane, a year 6 (ages 10/11) teacher, said:

*Next year I will be able to pace the work better, rather than squash it into a short time period, and teach the children in a more interesting way. In order to save time I used to take out the practical work and instead just go through the results of an investigation. Now I can complete each topic, let children participate fully and follow children's own ideas.*

CPD in teacher assessment of science is likely to be needed during this time of transition. Children will no longer be assessed externally on their ability to remember facts; teachers will assess children doing science and carrying out investigations. The Science Learning Centres are ideally placed to provide this support. Looking to the future, we expect that schools will request training on how to use *Assessing Pupils' Progress* (APP) in science, and effective cross-curricular approaches which link science with other subjects, including design and technology.

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Science Learning Centres document available on: [www.slcs.ac.uk/network/primarycurriculum](http://www.slcs.ac.uk/network/primarycurriculum) or [www.ase.org.uk](http://www.ase.org.uk)