13 December 2013

Do your students have the science support and practical experiences they need to succeed?

Dear Chair of Governors

We represent a group of organisations supporting science education who wish to help schools and colleges to maintain high quality science provision in these changing times. A good quality science education is critical to students' future success, be that in their pursuit of a science or engineering related career - a sector which turned over about £290 billion in 2008 – or their ability to participate, and make important decisions, in our increasingly scientific world.

The skills developed by practical science are particularly important, leading Ofsted to recommend, and Ofqual to propose, that these skills are directly assessed in science qualifications**.** The UK is consistently one of the top countries for both academic performance and engagement in science, with many schools and colleges providing excellent experiences of science practical work, as reported in Ofsted's recent science report, "Maintaining Curiosity". However, noting the many challenges science teachers face, Ofsted makes the following recommendation.

> *"School leaders, including governing bodies, should provide sufficient weekly curriculum time and, in secondary schools, laboratory space so that individual pupils develop good scientific enquiry skills as well as the knowledge they need to pass examinations."* Ofsted, November 2013.

High quality science practical work draws upon excellent technical support, specialist equipment and subject-specific professional development so it is important that schools and colleges continue to adequately fund and encourage practical science through any new challenges, including changes to curriculum, assessment, accountability, and budgetary pressures.

We have written to your Head of Science with details of the support which we and other organisations offer, particularly for practical science. This includes national benchmarks for practical science to help schools and colleges decide if they have adequate equipment, technician support, outside space, and

facilities to deliver a practical science curriculum (produced by the Association of Science Education, Institute of Physics, Royal Society of Chemistry, Royal Society, and Society of Biology through SCORE).

www.score-education.org/publications/publications-resourcing-benchmarks

We also highlighted the resources, materials and training that can help science teachers give stimulating hands-on lessons with confidence. This includes the National STEM Centre e-library, which has collected together hundreds of free resources to support the delivery of practical work, and Science Learning Centre courses for teachers and technicians – these are run across the country with bursaries available to help cover the costs of attending.

www.nationalstemcentre.org.uk/sciencepracticals *www.sciencelearningcentres.org.uk*

We have also written to the headteacher of your school or college and encourage you to discuss how practical science is delivered, including: how much budget is given to facilities and resources; your school's strategy for professional development; and the need for consistent technical support, so that all students receive the hands on science experiences they need. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you would like any more information.

Yours sincerely,

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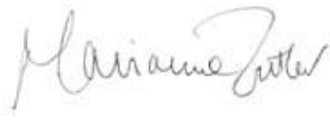

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