

SCI-FUN Roadshow 2011/12 Evaluation Report – Executive Summary

“We have had the Roadshow in school for many years now and have noticed a significant improvement in pupil uptake in the sciences since we started having it.”

PT Science, Holy Rood High School, Edinburgh

This report provides an assessment of the SCI-FUN Roadshow scheme, which is run by the University of Edinburgh. The scheme takes the experience of a science centre to early secondary school pupils across Scotland. It aims to encourage more young people to consider STEM-based careers and to appreciate the role of science in their everyday lives.

An after-only questionnaire was used to gain the views of teachers who had organised the 32 Roadshow school visits in 2011/12. The online questionnaire involved questions of open and closed structures, as well as the opportunity to voluntarily comment further. The questionnaire achieved a 100% response rate. For the purpose of the analysis, and when necessary, the ranking scale was organised in sections, with 9/10 and 10/10 comprising the top ranking level.

The key messages of the survey are:

- a total agreement in the respondents’ beliefs that the Roadshow visit increased their pupils’ interest in studying science further;
- 91% of contact teachers rated the visit experience for the S1/S2 pupils as 9/10 or more;
- the most important element of the scheme is the collection of hands-on exhibits, with 94% of respondents rating these at the highest level; and
- 94% of contact teachers would strongly recommend the scheme to other teachers.

In addition, the presentations are well-regarded, although some teachers suggest that the presentations should comprise a smaller proportion of the session (16% of respondents). The lowest-ranked part of the session was the *Climate Change* presentation, but 47% still valued this in the top ranking bracket. Fewer than half the respondents consider that supporting the curriculum is a motivation in securing a SCI-FUN Roadshow visit, and fewer than a third use the online materials for follow-up work.

This report finds that the SCI-FUN Roadshow is effective in encouraging young secondary pupils to continue studying science at Standard Grade level and beyond. The hands-on exhibits are the most beneficial and most highly valued element of the scheme. To improve the offering to the schools further, the balance of the sessions should be reviewed. Further investigations should be made to assess if highlighting the curriculum support of the scheme is required, as well as to determine if supportive materials to enhance the impact of the visit are necessary.

The recommendations include:

- reviewing further the balance of presentations and hands-on exhibits in each session;
- highlighting more clearly the curriculum support offered by the scheme; and
- investigating the value of follow-up materials on the website.

As this study is based on the views of only 32 contact teachers, further work may be required to confirm the findings. It would be useful to obtain the views of pupils to get their direct impressions of the Roadshow scheme: an evaluation project with this as its focus began in May 2012, and is reported separately.

“An excellent and professional visit from a team of highly skilled science communicators. They have a real sense of understanding of how schools and teachers work and aim to fit into our constraints to make it the best possible experience for our S2 pupils.”

Liz Anne Jaffray, PT Physics, St Ninian’s High School, East Dunbartonshire