

Practical Work in Science Study
In-depth focus groups

Dear Colleague

We very much appreciate the time that your school has given to completing our Practical Work in Science survey. This term we are also carrying out focus groups to gather in-depth views from heads of science, teachers and technicians. The study is led by Durham University's Centre for Evaluation and Monitoring (CEM) and School of Education and is funded by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, the Wellcome Trust and the Nuffield foundation.

We are interested in understanding in more detail the experiences of you and your staff relating to practical work in science. If you choose to participate, a researcher will visit your school to carry out the focus group which will take no more than one hour. Ideally we would like as many staff involved with the teaching of science from your school to attend including where possible, the head(s) of science, teachers and technicians. No specialist equipment will be required.

The focus group will be audio recorded and transcribed so that responses/views can be analysed, however, neither the participants nor your school will be identified in any report. All information given to us, including all personal details, will be treated in the strictest of confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act. The information collected as part of the focus groups (with all personally identifiable information removed) will be made freely available at the end of the study, and will help researchers, funders, and policy makers to understand the views about practical work in science in the UK. When the focus group responses and results of the study are published, your responses will be included with data provided by other people, no individual or institution will be identifiable from the research findings. The study has ethical clearance from Durham University's School of Education Research Ethics Committee and is conducted in accordance with British Educational Research Association (2011) guidelines. Completion of the focus groups is on a voluntary basis and you may withdraw at any time. An example of the consent form for participants is included with this letter.

If you wish to participate, please reply to the accompanying email selecting convenient date(s) from the options provided. If you have any questions please contact the research team at research@cem.dur.ac.uk or telephone 0191 334 4232.

Practical work is a long-standing component of science education. We thank you for your help in documenting how science practical work is delivered, and any changes occurring over the lifetime of the study.

Thank you again for your support.

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**Durham University School of Education and CEM
Practical Work in Science Study
Focus Group
Participant Consent Form**

The purpose of the group discussion and the nature of the questions have been explained to me. I consent to take part in a focus group about my experiences relating to practical work in science. I also consent to be recorded during this focus group discussion. My participation is voluntary. I understand that I am free to leave the group at any time. If I decide not to participate at any time during the discussion, my decision will in no way affect me or my employer. None of my experiences or thoughts will be shared with anyone outside of the study partners without removal of all identifying information. The information I provide during the focus group will be included with responses from other people so that I cannot be identified. I have been informed that information gathered during the discussion will be stored securely, under password protection. I understand the project has received ethical clearance from Durham University School of Education and is being conducted in accordance with British Educational Research Association (2011) guidelines.

Name

Date

Signature

Signed on behalf of the Project Team by:

Name

Date

Signature