

Careers advice 'crucial' in encouraging greater science take-up

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(PhysOrg.com) -- More pupils do physics and chemistry after the age of 16 in schools which provide a more comprehensive range of careers supervision and advice, according to new research by academics at the University of York.

The study revealed that schools which had a higher take-up of physics and chemistry were those that set up science-based work placements with local employers – and allowed [pupils](#) a significant say in their choice of placement.

The researchers compared the take-up of physics and chemistry in four pairs of secondary schools across England in rural, semi-rural and urban locations. They included six comprehensives and two all-girl grammar schools.

The research, led by Professor Judith Bennett of the University's Department of Education, was commissioned by the AstraZeneca [Science Teaching Trust](#).

Using the National Pupil Database, the research team identified schools with similar characteristics including both 11-16 and 11-18 schools. They examined the average performance across all GCSE and Science and the average numbers going on to take A-levels as well as the proportion of those doing physics and chemistry.

Professor Bennett said: “We wanted to look at factors that influenced

pupils' decisions including particular features of the schools. The strongest message to come out is that take-up of physics and chemistry is greater where careers advice and guidance is more comprehensive.

“We found take-up was better where teachers were more heavily involved in careers advice and guidance and where pupils were able to experience science-based work placements. Pupils also appreciated being involved in the selection of their work placement.

“Schools with a high uptake were well-networked with local employers and arranged for people working in the area of science to come in and talk to pupils. Pupils were also encouraged to set up science-based societies in [school](#).”

More information: Bennett, J., Hampden-Thompson, G. and Lubben, F. (2011) Schools that make a difference to post-compulsory uptake of science: final project report to the Astra Zeneca Science Teaching Trust. York: University of York, Department of Education. An electronic version of the report may be found at:

www.york.ac.uk/education/research/research-paper/

Provided by University of York

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