



MEDIA ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

I'm a Scientist, Get me out of Here



Taking part in *I'm a Scientist, Get me out of here* is a great opportunity to engage your students in science. But perhaps you hadn't considered that it's also a fantastic opportunity for you to engage the local media — and in turn your local community — in your school.

The participating students and scientists are sure to make a success of the event. With a few simple steps you could also generate some positive publicity for the hard work your school puts into educating your students.

This toolkit has been put together to lead your colleagues through the process of pain-free media engagement. Share it with your school secretary, business manager or headteacher as appropriate.

Ideally use this kit to garner press interest while the event is taking place. But if for whatever reason you don't manage to engage the media during the event, don't worry. You could still get some follow-up interest by taking some simple steps during the event to capture the mood and experiences.

And you'll also have resources at hand for any future use in newsletters, blog posts, poster displays and the like.

So please take advantage of this toolkit to generate the positive publicity your school and students deserve. If you have any questions along the way, you can contact us at admin@imascientist.org.uk.

Good luck!

The I'm a Scientist Team

Top tip: Don't forget that Twitter is a key component of the *I'm a Scientist* events. We use it as a way to interact with scientists, teachers and funders and to communicate how the event is going. Get on board and follow us at @imascientist and keep an eye on tweets marked #IASUK.



CONTENTS

This document provides you with useful tools and tips to help you raise awareness of your participation in *I'm a Scientist*. It addresses the following questions:

- How do I contact the media?
- What if I'm asked for a quote or spokesperson?
- What about images?
- Is there anything else I need to know?

The final section is a template you can use as the basis for a press release about the *I'm a Scientist* event at your school.

Top tip: Engaging with the media can be a learning experience for your students too. Perhaps you can think of some novel ways to get your students to interact with the local papers, like writing a letter about the event or even a guest article.



HOW DO I CONTACT THE MEDIA?

Many schools have existing relationships with local media outlets. You may feel comfortable simply picking up the phone or sending an informal email to your contacts with news of the event and an invitation to cover it.

But if you don't have established contacts, or really want to get bang for your buck, then you could send out a press release to your local papers (their contact details will be available on their website). It sounds very formal, but a press release is simply an effective way of communicating with the media, as it provides all the information in a concise and accurate manner.

It can also give you a tangible record of the event, which you can share in a number of ways for maximum impact:

- **Email:** Send an email to any local papers to make them aware of your press release. Either copy the press release text into the body of the email or provide the title and summary with a link back to the published press release (if published on your website). You may also want to share this with governors, parents and other stakeholders.
- **Website:** Mention the event on the news section of your website with a link to your press release.
- **Blog:** If you have a blog, use the press release to form the basis of a blog post with a link to the full press release. Think outside the box here: you could encourage a pupil to write a blog post reviewing the event?
- **Twitter:** Send a tweet out with a link to your press release.
- **Newsletters:** Re-purpose copy from the press release to drop into your next newsletter or other communications (both internal and external).

TIPS ON HOW TO WRITE AN EFFECTIVE PRESS RELEASE:

- Make sure your press release is dated
- State if it is for immediate release or under embargo until a later date
- Use a short, action-oriented headline with key words
- Imagine people are only going to read the first paragraph – what is the one thing you want them to take away from your press release?
- Be concise: use simple sentences and short paragraphs
- Use quotes to bring the story to life (the next section has tips on writing good quotes)
- Clearly say when the press release has ended and include contextual background information in a final Editors' notes section
- Spellcheck, spellcheck and spellcheck again
- Include hyperlinks to your website and other social networks
- Don't forget to include contact details. Make it easy for press and others in the community to follow up with you.



A press release template is outlined at the end of this document. You can use this as a guide, amending as appropriate.

Additionally, why not invite your local journalist(s) along to your classroom to observe a live chat? That way they will see first hand the way in which your students are engaging with the subject matter and interacting with scientists. And it will give them the opportunity to talk directly to teachers and students about the event.



WHAT IF I'M ASKED FOR A QUOTE OR SPOKESPERSON?

Journalists love to hear about and talk to *people*, not just hear that an event is happening or watch it from a safe distance.

QUOTES

Quotes are a journalist's bread and butter. They make a story interesting as they introduce that key *people* ingredient. Journalists will want to know what it was like to take part in the event, and what your students got out of it (and teachers too, for that matter).

Quotes are also an essential part of any press release. They are often the most effective tool to really engage someone in your story (and get a journalist to cover it!). We recommend that you include one from your Head of Science/ Science teacher, and one from your headteacher.

To source a good quote, it helps to have some questions for your respondent to think about. Here are a few questions you could pose to them:

- How does this event fit in with the general teaching approach at your school?
- How is this event different to how the children normally learn?
- How many pupils are taking part in *I'm a Scientist*?
- How many questions were asked/ have been asked so far?
- What was the hardest/most amusing question asked so far?
- What have your pupils gained by taking part in this event?
- Will you take part in *I'm a Scientist* again?

Make sure that your quotes can stand alone – if your quote was pulled out of the press release, would it make sense?

Make sure your quote is correctly attributed by name and job title. For each person quoted, you should provide:

- Name
- Job title (if applicable)
- Headshot photo

Most importantly, remember that quotes are about adding colour to a story – so don't worry about making them too formal, and let the personality of whoever it quoted shine through.



SPOKESPERSON

You should also have a spokesperson (or ideally spokespeople) lined up in case of media interview requests. Consider putting students as well as teachers forward for commentary. If you are able to invite a journalist along to a live chat, you could give them access to student and teacher interviews at the same time. You will need to provide the interviewer with the following for each spokesperson:

- Name
- Job title or year group (if applicable)
- Headshot photo



WHAT ABOUT IMAGES?

What else will bring the event to life for journalists? One word: images. After all, a picture paints a thousand words. There are plenty of options for including images alongside your press release.

I'm a Scientist artwork, photos and image resources can be found on the *I'm a Scientist* website, here <http://about.imascientist.org.uk/artwork-and-images/>. Please feel free to share them with media.

Additionally, take photos of students taking part in the event, as well as the science teacher(s) involved. Make sure you have headshots of any teachers/ students providing quotes in your press release or taking part in press interviews. These will be of great interest to media and will provide you with great material to post on your own website.



IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I NEED TO KNOW?

So we've covered the people ingredient of a story, and the need for quotes/spokespeople. We've also mentioned the need for photos to bring the story to life. The final component a journalist needs is facts and figures.

So be ready to share details of how many of your pupils are taking part, and from which year groups.

You may also be asked for further contextual details, such as details of funders and who (schools and scientists) is taking part.

Below are some key facts and figures that you may wish to share with your contacts as appropriate.

WHAT IS I'M A SCIENTIST, GET ME OUT OF HERE ALL ABOUT?

Chances are, you already know a fair bit about the event, given you are taking part in it! But here's a little information that could be useful as a quick reminder before talking to a journalist, or that you are welcome to copy into emails etc. when describing the event. (Note that this information is already copied into the template press release at the end of the toolkit.)

I'm a Scientist, Get me out of here is a one-of-a-kind online public engagement event where school students from across the UK meet and interact with scientists. It's an X Factor-style competition between scientists, where the students are the judges.

Students challenge the scientists over fast-paced online text-based live chats. They ask the scientists anything they want, and vote for their favourite scientist to win a prize of £500 to communicate their work with the public.

The event is supported by carefully developed, and tested, teaching resources.

The aim of the event is to get students excited about science. Students see that scientists are 'normal' people, learn that science lessons relate to everyday life, and become more enthused about science.

For the Scientists involved, *I'm a Scientist* provides the opportunity to develop communication skills, gain a fresh perspective on their work, and find out what young people think about science and the role of scientists.



STUDENT WINNERS

One of your students winning “Student Winner” might be a great addition to a news piece.

In every event the scientists and moderators will nominate a student in each zone to be the Student Winner. These are students who have engaged really well with the event, who have asked great questions and comments. Winning students get a certificate, and a £20 voucher.

In every zone there are around 400 students, so getting “Student Winner” is no small achievement.

GENERAL STATEMENTS ABOUT *I'M A SCIENTIST*

- It started in 2008, with 15 schools taking part, and has grown to 130 schools taking part in the June 2016 event
- The events run in November, March, and June every year
- *I'm a Scientist* gets students excited about science (and science lessons!)
- Students see that scientists are normal people
- Students learn that science lessons relate to real life
- Students are introduced the wide range of careers within science – not just limited to biology, chemistry, and physics
- Schools are given the opportunity to build partnerships with scientists
- Scientists develop their communication skills and gain a fresh perspective on their work
- The science community finds out what young people think about science and the role of scientists

FUNDERS

The [Wellcome Trust](#) is the main funder of the *I'm a Scientist* events.

The Wellcome Trust is an independent global charitable foundation dedicated to improving health. The Wellcome Trust supports the brightest minds in biomedical research and the medical humanities. The Wellcome Trust's public engagement grants are intended to promote interest, excitement and debate around science and society.

Additional funders in November 2016 include:

- [The Royal Society of Chemistry](#)
- [The Physiological Society](#)



For further information about funders, please visit <http://about.imascientist.org.uk/funders/>.

WHO'S TAKING PART IN *I'M A SCIENTIST* NOVEMBER 2016?

Students at nearly 150 schools from across the UK will be interacting with 45 scientists across 9 different themed “zones” this November.

For further information about who's taking part in *I'm a Scientist* November 2016, please visit <http://imascientist.org.uk/news>

Top tip: Remember you can always contact admin@imascientist.org.uk if you'd like further information about '*I'm a Scientist, Get me out of here*'.



PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

The following template can be used to form the basis of your press release. It is only a starting point – the most interesting details will be specific to the event happening at your school. So remember to amend as appropriate, completing any gaps in brackets. In particular, don't forget to source some quotes!

PRESS RELEASE

07 NOVEMBER 2016 [AMEND DATE]

For immediate release

PUPILS AT [INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL] PUT SCIENTISTS THROUGH THEIR PACES IN ONLINE COMPETITION

[INSERT LOCATION], UK

Pupils at [insert school name] have been interacting with scientists from across the UK in an online public engagement event aimed at getting students excited about science.

I'm a Scientist, Get me out of here sees students putting scientists through their paces through online live chats in which they can ask the experts about anything, from climate change to coding.

The aim of the event is to get students excited about science. Students see that scientists are normal people, learn that science lessons relate to real life, and become more enthused about science.

The event runs from 7th-18th November 2016.

I'm a Scientist is funded principally by the [Wellcome Trust](#), an independent global charitable foundation dedicated to improving health. Additional funders in November 2016 include:

- [The Royal Society of Chemistry](#)
- [The Physiological Society](#)

[Insert name], Headteacher at [insert school name] said: "Quote".

[Insert name], Science teacher at [insert school name] said: "Quote".

[Insert name], year [x] pupil at [insert school name] said: "Quote".



###

-ENDS-

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

[INSERT SCHOOL NAME]

[Insert school contact details here]

I'M A SCIENTIST

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NOTES TO EDITORS

ABOUT I'M A SCIENTIST, GET ME OUT OF HERE

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The event runs from 7th-18th November 2016.

If you’d like your school to take part in future *I’m a Scientist* events, register your interest here <http://imascientist.org.uk/teachers>.

Funders:

The [Wellcome Trust](#) is the main funder of the *I’m a Scientist* events.

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For further information about funders, please visit <http://about.imascientist.org.uk/funders/>.

Artwork:

I’m a Scientist artwork, photos and image resources can be found on the *I’m a Scientist* website, here <http://about.imascientist.org.uk/artwork-and-images/>.

Contact:

For further information about *I’m a Scientist, Get me out here*, visit <http://imascientist.org.uk/>.

Contact: Shane McCracken | Director | [Gallomanor](#)

Telephone: +44 (0)1225 326892

Email: shane@gallomanor.com



ABOUT *[INSERT NAME OF SCHOOL]*

[Insert boilerplate copy about your school]

For further information, visit *[insert school website URL]*.