



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 it's also a chance for you to engage local media — and in turn your local community — in your school.

The participating students and scientists are sure to make a success of the activity. 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 activity is taking place. But if you don't manage to engage the media while you're taking part, don't worry. You could still get some follow-up interest by taking our suggested steps during the activity to capture the mood and experiences. This also gives you resources to use in the future, for your 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!

From the I'm a Scientist Team

Top tip:

Don't forget that Twitter is a key component of the *I'm a Scientist* activity. We use it as a way to interact with scientists, teachers and funders and to communicate how the two weeks are going. Get on board and follow us at [@imascientist](https://twitter.com/imascientist) and keep an eye on tweets marked [#IASUK](https://twitter.com/hashtag/IASUK).



CONTENTS

This kit 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 for you to use as the basis for a press release about the *I'm a Scientist* activity 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 activity 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 activity 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 activity, 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 activity 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 activity?
- **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 (see the next section for tips on this)



- 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.

Top tip:

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 activity.



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

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

QUOTES

Quotes are an essential part of any press release. 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 activity, and what your students (and teachers) got out of it.

We recommend 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 you could ask them:

- How does this activity fit with the general teaching approach at your school?
- How is this activity 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 activity?
- 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?

Your quote must be correctly attributed. For each person quoted, you should provide:

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

Most importantly, remember quotes are about adding colour to a story — don't try to make 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.



WHAT ABOUT IMAGES?

What else will bring the activity 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 about.imascientist.org.uk/artwork-and-images/. Please feel free to share them with media.

Additionally, take photos of students taking part in the activity, 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.

Be ready to share details of how many of your pupils are taking part, which Zone(s) 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. You'll find this information and more below.

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

Chances are, you already know a fair bit about the activity, given you are taking part in it! But here's a little information to quickly read before talking to a journalist, or that you are welcome to copy into emails etc. when describing the activity. (Note: 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 activity where school students from across the UK connect with scientists.

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 activity is supported by carefully developed, and tested, teaching resources.

The aim of the activity 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 them with 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.

The activity runs from 10th–21st June 2019.

STUDENT WINNERS

In every activity 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 activity, who have asked great questions and comments. Winning students get a certificate, and a £20 voucher.



If one of your students wins “Student Winner” it would make a great addition to a news piece. 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 over 100 schools taking part in June 2018
- *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

[Wellcome](#) is the main funder of the *I'm a Scientist* project. Wellcome is an independent global charitable foundation dedicated to improving health. Wellcome supports the brightest minds in biomedical research and the medical humanities. Wellcome’s public engagement grants are intended to promote interest, excitement and debate around science and society.

Additional funders for *I'm a Scientist* June 2019 include:

- [The British Psychological Society](#) (BPS)
- [Science and Technology Facilities Council](#) (STFC)
- [The National Collaborative Outreach Programme](#) (NCOP)

For further information about funders, please visit about.imascientist.org.uk/funders/

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

Around 2,500 students from 60 schools across the UK will be interacting with 54 scientists during June’s *I'm a Scientist* activity.

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 activity 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

1 JUNE 2019 [AMEND DATE]

For immediate release

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

[INSERT LOCATION], UK

Pupils at [insert school name] have been interacting with scientists from across the UK in an online public engagement activity 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 activity 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 activity runs from 10th–21st June 2019.

I'm a Scientist is funded principally by [Wellcome](#), an independent global charitable foundation dedicated to improving health. Additional funders for *I'm a Scientist* June 2019 include:

- [The British Psychological Society](#) (BPS)
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- [The National Collaborative Outreach Programme](#) (NCOP)



[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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Around 2,500 students from 60 schools across the UK will be interacting with 54 scientists during June's *I'm a Scientist* activity.

The activity runs from 10th–21st June 2019.

If you'd like your school to take part in future *I'm a Scientist* activities, register your interest here imascientist.org.uk/teachers.

Funders:

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For further information about funders, please visit 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 about.imascientist.org.uk/artwork-and-images/.

Contact:

For further information about *I'm a Scientist*, *Get me out here!* visit 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].