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### **Northern Ireland's schools need greater support for science**

A report launched today by the Campaign for Science & Engineering (CaSE) points to the missing link in Northern Ireland's development plans. School science education could be crucial to the work of the region's government departments and their related bodies, but has not received enough attention from any of them.

Official bodies in Northern Ireland have laid out their intentions for improving teachers' professional development and creating an innovative knowledge economy, and science is crucial to both of these.

The report clarifies and discusses Northern Ireland's unique educational system and situation, drawing together existing evidence to give a comprehensive picture of the situation for science education. Through discussions with a wide range of interested parties, CaSE has developed a series of recommendations and proposals on how to bring improvements to school science in the region.

The report pays particular attention to supporting teachers' subject knowledge in science, and looks at the practical issues of how this can be delivered.

"Science teachers in Ulster say they want more opportunities to develop their knowledge of rapidly-changing science subjects, so that they can sustain their pupils' enthusiasm and ensure they have an up-to-date education," said Rosemary Davies, who carried out the research summarised in the report, "this situation also applies in other parts of the UK, and it is crucial that we get it right if the country is to produce a competitive workforce".

"Not enough young people are choosing to study physical sciences and engineering throughout the UK, and CaSE wants to raise awareness of this issue to make sure it receives as much attention in Northern Ireland as it does in other parts of the country," added Ms Davies. "We want to bring this crucial issue to the attention of ministers and raise awareness among the education community."

The report is summarised in the document *Opinion Forum: Science Education in Northern Ireland's Schools*, with an extended version available online. The document follows on from surveys carried out by CaSE looking at school science in England and Scotland, and is published as part of a series of *Opinion Forums*, representing the views of CaSE's members, contacts and supporters about current issues in science and engineering policy.

The summary report is available at

<http://www.sciencecampaign.org.uk/documents/2006/CaSE0613a.pdf>

The full version is available at

<http://www.sciencecampaign.org.uk/documents/2006/CaSE0613b.pdf>

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