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**CaSE PR 07/08**

**CaSE celebrates A level student numbers rising in chemistry, physics and especially mathematics**

CaSE was pleased today that the number of A levels students taking physics had increased by 100 and chemistry by 200. Furthermore, these rises look set to continue as there were also increases at AS level. Unfortunately, the number of biology students had dropped by 300, but increasing AS level numbers suggest that this is not the start of a decline. CaSE particularly celebrated the combined increase of 4700 students in mathematics and further mathematics.

CaSE's Acting Director, Dr Hilary Leever, said:

"Recent improvements in further mathematics and mathematics may be attributable to the Further Mathematics Network which has made sure that all students have access to appropriate tuition.

"It is obvious and has been shown that being taught by specialist teachers is important, but a quarter of schools have no physics specialist teacher and one in six lack a chemistry specialist. Yet the Government has still not set targets for recruits into teacher training in these subjects. Just 279 physics specialists and 371 chemistry specialists achieved qualified teacher status this year, which is several hundred short of estimates of what is needed to modestly improve the situation."

The many initiatives to increase uptake of physics and chemistry, including funding science centres, clubs or outreach programmes, have taken years to have impact.

Hilary Leever, said:

"While we support all the recent initiatives promoting science, they do not address the core issues – the shortage of specialist teachers and the fact that most students do not have the opportunity to take separate physics, chemistry and biology GCSEs.

"In order to sustain increasing student interest in these subjects, we must boost the numbers of children taking separate science GCSEs, and provide them with teachers who are qualified in the subjects that they are teaching, then we can expect more of them to go on to study and do well at A level.

On the provision of separate science GCSEs, Dr Leever went on to say:

"Shockingly, just 26% of mainstream schools offer three separate science GCSEs and, perhaps even more strangely, just 58% of science specialist schools do so, as compared with 66% of grammar schools and 72% of independent schools. When students are restricted to combined science GCSEs, they are less likely to take and do well at science A levels. Consistent with this, about three times more students take at least one science A level in grammar and independent schools than in mainstream or science specialist schools.

"The inequity in science education across different types of school is a disgrace, especially given the long term benefits of a science education."

ENDS

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