



**Children in Scotland**  
every child - every childhood

## Media Release

25 March 2009

### Early learning the key to achieving Gordon Brown's "national ambition" for schools science

**Innovative science teaching in nurseries and primary schools could hold the key to achieving the Government's ambitious targets to increase the number of pupils choosing to study science and maths, according to the latest issue of Children in Europe magazine.**

Prime Minister Gordon Brown has announced the intention to double the number of pupils in England and Wales taking three science subjects and increase by nearly half those taking maths at A level as part of a drive to ensure Britain produces "the great scientists of tomorrow".

But although children are born with the natural desire to question, explore and understand the world around them that is the foundation of scientific inquiry, many lose the excitement and passion of discovery as they move through more formal education, meaning that pupils choosing study options may not see the relevance of science to their everyday lives or the career options it can open up.

Capitalising on the interest of very young children can pay dividends, not only in building positive attitudes to science and discovery but also important skills for learning such as cooperation, a questioning attitude, perseverance, and respect for others and the living world. The message from scientists and educationalists across Europe is clear: even the youngest children can and should be encouraged to engage in scientific exploration, discovery and fun.

Children in Europe Issue 16, ***Exploring the world and beyond: young children as scientists***, looks at approaches to science education across Europe, considering how teachers can be encouraged and supported in developing the confidence to teach science and maths effectively. Accounts of good practice show nursery- and primary-age children engaging with topics from anatomy to astronomy and physics to zoology, developing hypotheses,

carrying out experiments and recording their observations. There are also profiles of initiatives that bring science to life, such as Generation Science, the Edinburgh International Science Festival's touring programme, and Mathekings, an active maths programme from The Netherlands.

Peter Moss, Editor of Children in Europe and Professor of Early Childhood Provision at the Institute of Education in London, said: "This edition of Children in Europe shows the issue of young children as researchers and scientists is high on the agenda across Europe, with a wealth of exciting and innovative projects that respond to children's natural curiosity and wonder."

Bronwen Cohen, chief executive of Children in Scotland, the English language publisher of Children in Europe magazine, said: "Children in Europe's review points to the potential for laying the basis for science learning in early years services. Questioning and exploring the natural environment is second nature to young children. We need to build on this and not wait until children are older if we are to ensure that the next generation understands the challenges and opportunities science presents."

Alison Garnham, joint chief executive at Daycare Trust, said: "Early childhood education and care can play an important role in engaging children's interest in science. Many early years workers lack confidence in teaching children science and maths, but equipping and resourcing them to do this effectively can have a long-term impact, both on the children themselves, and, as the next generation of scientists emerges, on all our lives."

**To order a copy of Children in Europe telephone 0131 222 2400 or visit [www.childreninScotland.org.uk/publications](http://www.childreninScotland.org.uk/publications)**

**For further information contact Tracey Francis  
Email [tfrancis@childreninScotland.org.uk](mailto:tfrancis@childreninScotland.org.uk) / tel 0131 222 2419**

### **Notes for Editors**

1. **Children in Europe:** Children in Europe is a magazine for everyone working with and for children from 0 to 10 and those interested in children's issues. It is published simultaneously in 15 languages and 17 countries by a network of national magazines across Europe. It aims to provide a forum for ideas, practice and information and to contribute to the development of policy and practice at European and national levels. It is published in the UK by Children in Scotland. Children in Europe Issue 16, ***Exploring the world and beyond: young children as scientists*** is published on 24 March 2009. For more information visit [www.childrenineurope.org](http://www.childrenineurope.org)

An international conference with the same title will be held on 16 September 2009.

2. **Children in Scotland** is the national agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that relevant policies, services and provision are of the best possible quality and able to meet the demands of a diverse society. For further information visit [www.childreninscotland.org.uk/eur](http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/eur)

3. **Daycare Trust** is the national childcare charity campaigning for quality affordable accessible childcare for all and raising the voices of children, parents and carers. We advise parents and carers, providers, employers, trade unions and policymakers on childcare issues. We recognise that everyone is unique and we value difference in our communities. We listen to all views and are committed to act without prejudice. We oppose all discrimination and promote equality in all we do.