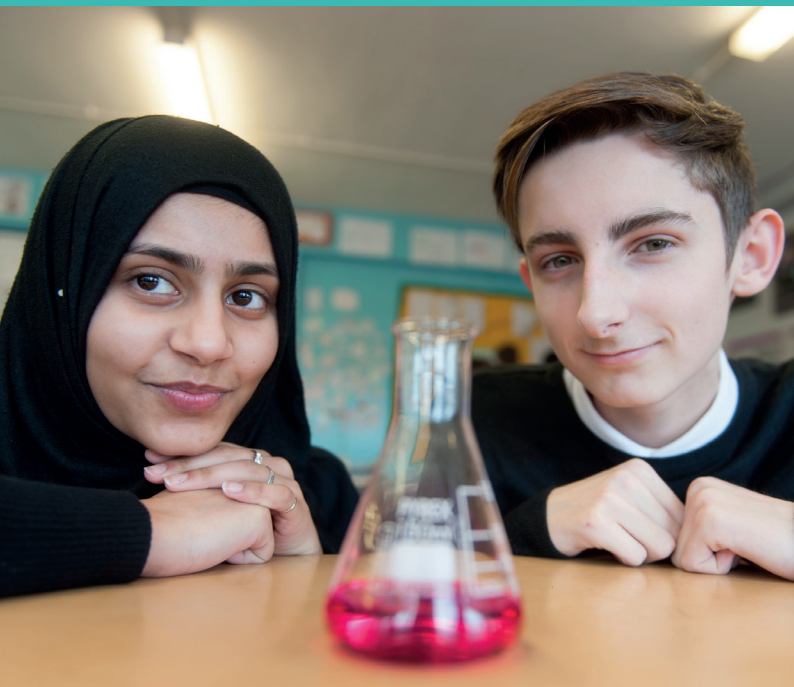




IMPROVING
GENDER
BALANCE

“Boys and girls are
just different”



“Boys and girls are just different”

There is overwhelming evidence that this is not the case. There is more variance within groups of boys and within groups of girls, than there is between boys and girls. Gender differences are learned, not innate.

See iop.org/genderbalance for more information



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IMPROVING GENDER BALANCE

“ It is unfair to do something
just for girls or boys”



“ It is unfair to do something just for girls or boys”

One group should not receive preferential treatment compared to any other group. However, if one group is being disadvantaged, then positive action should be taken. For example, if a lunch-time languages club only attracts girls, the organiser could consider ways to encourage boys to participate.

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IMPROVING GENDER BALANCE

“ All young people know they are free to choose any activities or subjects they want ”



“ All young people know they are free to choose any activities or subjects they want”

Unconscious bias and the normalisation of stereotypes means there are often unspoken barriers. Simply allowing free play, or allowing free subject choice, without addressing these barriers, is not sufficient.

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IMPROVING GENDER BALANCE

“ We can just run an annual girls into science event with lots of female role models”



“ We can just run an annual girls into science event with lots of female role models”

One-off activities or interventions do not have a lasting impact. They need to be part of a wider strategy. Role models can have a positive impact, but usually only where there is an ongoing relationship.

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IMPROVING GENDER BALANCE

“ A lesson on the science of make-up will encourage girls to take up STEM subjects”





A lesson on the science of make-up will encourage girls to take up STEM subjects”

Attempts to make a subject more appealing by reinforcing a stereotype are unlikely to be effective. Make-up, for example, may appeal to some girls, but will make others feel patronised.

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IMPROVING GENDER BALANCE

“ Boys thrive in a competitive learning environment”



“Boys thrive in a competitive learning environment”

Competitions might motivate the successful, but there are always more losers than winners. Competitive learning environments may actively discourage those boys who do not immediately succeed.

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