

STATEMENT ON PISA 2006

Following leaks to Spanish and German newspapers of PISA data, the OECD have decided to publish the league table of country rankings today on science, the main subject of PISA 2006.

The UK ranking on science is between 8th and 12th when compared to OECD countries and between 12th and 18th when compared to all participating countries. The UK is in the higher achieving group on both measures.

On Tuesday December 4 at 9am GMT the OECD will publish their full report and UK countries will publish more detailed country reports. A supporting Statistical First Release for England will also be published on that day.

OECD says "Comparisons between the results of the 2006 tests and those of previous years are not strictly valid, as the nature of the tests varied". The UK did not have a ranking in PISA 2003.

The PISA report for England, to be published on Tuesday 4 December, will show:

On science achievement:

- England is among the countries with the largest numbers of high achieving students. Three per cent of England's students achieved PISA level 6, one of the three highest proportions at this level.
- There is a wide gap in attainment and England has a wide range of achievement, with a large difference between the scores of our highest and lowest achievers.
- On gender, in England boys outperformed girls in terms of the application of science knowledge.

On teenagers' attitudes to science in England:

- Students in England see science as valuable for understanding the world and improving living conditions. They see science as less valuable personally than it is to society, but say that it is important for them to do well in science.
- 79% of students agreed that they find that science helps them to understand the things around them.
- 62% of students agreed that they will use science in many ways when they are adults.
- 61% of students agreed that when they leave school there will be many opportunities for them to use science.
- Only 38% of students said that they liked reading about science – well below the OECD average.
- Only 55% of students said that they generally have fun when they are learning science – below the OECD average.

On English teenagers' confidence in their abilities:

- 72% agreed that they can usually give good answers to test questions on science – above the OECD average.
- 64% agreed that they can easily understand new ideas in science – above the OECD average.

While students were generally similar in their attitude to learning science, and more positive in their enjoyment of doing science problems, they appear to be more negative about enjoyment of science for its own sake. They find science less fun and report less enjoyment of reading about it, than the average in other OECD countries.

The science-related activities that students in England were most likely to do were watching TV programmes or visiting websites about science. Apart from this, they did not appear to spend a lot of time involved in science activities. Students were least likely to report attending science clubs, although most headteachers said they provided science activities in school such as science clubs and field trips.

In terms of English teenagers' views about the use of science:

- 75% agreed that they study science because they know it is useful for them.
- 71% agreed that making an effort in science subjects is worth it because this will help them in the work they want to do later on.
- 71% agreed that studying science subjects is worthwhile for them because what they learn will improve their career prospects.
- 54% agreed that what they learn in their science subjects is important for them because they need this for what they want to study later on.

Although English teenagers say that studying science is useful for their futures, fewer say that they want to work in science-related careers or to study science. Although students agree that science is useful and beneficial, most do not wish to be involved with it in their future lives.

- 34% agreed that they would like to work in a career involving science.
- 33% agreed they would like to study science after secondary school.

On science in schools:

- 92% of students agreed that the subjects available at their school provide students with the basic skills and knowledge for a science-related career – above the OECD average.
- 84% of students agreed that their teachers equip them with the basic skills and knowledge they need for a science-related career – above the OECD average.