

### **Topic 3: Primary and Secondary Education**

#### **Comments from the Royal Society of Chemistry**

1. Science is compulsory for all students aged between 5 and 16. There are two years of secondary schooling after age 16 and before entry to university and students have a free choice of subjects. About 50,000 students a year opt to take chemistry, of whom about 3,000 choose to study the subject at university.
2. The curriculum is laid down by government, but is subject to revision. The next revision at secondary school level will come into effect in 2006 and the RSC is represented on the Committee concerned with science. We will be employing a teacher to prepare teaching materials in modern aspects of chemistry to support the new curriculum.
3. About 15% of RSC's net expenditure is spent on supporting chemistry in schools. Our main programmes aim to
  - improve teachers' understanding of modern science and its applications through short courses in industry and universities.
  - help teachers with difficult parts of the curriculum and with modern aspects of chemistry by providing teaching resources (book and electronic).
  - present chemistry as an attractive career to students through publications, lectures and events.
4. The RSC draws upon resources produced in other (mainly English speaking) countries but also from Germany and the Netherlands. However, at the schools level, the scope for major international collaboration is limited by the nature of a country's education system. RSC participates in the International Chemistry Olympiad, but it is not a major activity and, whilst a wonderful experience for the team that is chosen, has little effect in promoting the subject at home.