

Dear Parent/ Carer,

**RE: Evaluation of CREST Silver Award programme.**

I am writing to tell you about an exciting project that your child's school is participating in next year – the **evaluation of the CREST Silver Award**. The CREST Silver Award programme is delivered by the British Science Association (BSA) for students aged 14 to 16. The programme gives pupils an opportunity to run their own Science, Technology and Maths (STEM) research project, with the aim of developing their understanding of 'real world' science to improve their attainment in STEM and transferable skills for further education and future employment.

NatCen Social Research is evaluating the programme to understand if it makes a difference to pupils. NatCen will be randomly assigning schools to either an 'intervention' or 'control' group. Schools in the 'intervention group' will run the CREST Silver Award in 2017/18 while schools in the 'control group' will not. This means there is a 50/50 chance that your child's school will be offering the CREST Silver Award to pupils.

Year 9 pupils in all participating schools will be asked to let their teacher know if they are interested in taking part in the CREST Silver Award. If your child is interested they will complete a short survey about their views of science and school. Your child will be made aware that completing the survey does not mean they will be offered a place on the CREST Silver Award and that their school may be in the group that will not be delivering the programme. If your child is interested in CREST but ends up in a school that will not be running the Award, they will instead be offered a £10 high street voucher.

All Year 9 pupils participating in the evaluation will sit a science assessment in summer term 2018, whether or not they have been participating in the CREST Silver Award programme. They will also be asked to complete a short questionnaire on their attitudes to school and science. In addition, some pupils may be asked to take part in a focus group. The assessment and questionnaire will take around one hour to complete. The results from the assessment will be used for the research only and will not alter the teacher's assessment of your child's progress. The assessments will be invigilated and collected by NatCen Social Research, processed by GL Assessment, and the results will only be accessible to the researchers at NatCen working on the project. The data will be kept confidential, in accordance with the 1998 Data Protection Act. Only group results of the programme evaluation will be published. Your child's name and the name of the school will not be used in any report arising from the research.

**We are asking for your permission to obtain information about your child from the school, including their name, date of birth and Unique Pupil Number.** Information provided will be shared with a small group of researchers at NatCen Social Research. We will use the information provided to link with the National Pupil Database (which is held by the Department for Education). It will be shared with the Department for Education, EEF, EEF's data contractor FFT Education and in an anonymised form for research purposes. Once your child's information is included in the data set, the data will be anonymised and no one will be able to identify individual pupils.

Please complete the slip below if you do not want your child's school to share your child's information with the evaluators and wish your child to opt-out of the project evaluation.

If you would like more information about this project, you can contact the research team at NatCen, using the telephone number or email address below.

**If you are happy with everything in this letter you do not need to do anything.**

Yours sincerely,

**Margaret Anderson**  
Senior Researcher  
NatCen Social Research



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**Website:** [www.natcen.ac.uk/taking-part/the-crest-silver-award-programme](http://www.natcen.ac.uk/taking-part/the-crest-silver-award-programme)

**CREST Silver Award programme OPT-OUT SLIP**

I do **not** want my child to take part in the trial and evaluation of the CREST Silver Award programme, including all the research activities described above:

Your child's name.....

Your full name.....

**Your signature**.....

**Date**.....

Please return this slip to your school within **two weeks** of receipt of this letter if you wish to **opt-out** of the CREST Silver Award programme trial and evaluation.