



## RIS Case Study: Essa Academy, Bolton

Essa Academy is a non-selective, mixed academy for ages 11-16, and is part of the Alliance for Learning SCITT. 29.8% of the academy's pupils are eligible for Free School Meals.

Researchers in Schools has been working with Essa academy since 2018, having partnered with the Alliance for learning SCITT since 2015. The school's Principal, Martin Knowles, said of his RIS participants:



***My RIS teachers are building a love of science in the school; they make things go bang and really take the time to give pupils the awe and wonder — you can see lights go on in the pupils' eyes!***

***The level of engagement in intervention activities is brilliant: high-ability pupils working at A-level and even degree level! They are oversubscribed with pupils wanting to learn more.***

***I would take more RIS participants in a shot!"***

*The RIS educational research projects are aligned with our school needs. RIS participants are working with a member of the leadership team who is completing their NPQH to help ensure that the school benefits as much as possible.*

**Martin Knowles, Principal,  
ESSA Academy**

***RIS participants have really strong subject knowledge, a mature approach to the course and teaching, and are able to cope well with pressure***

**Hilary Langmead-Jones, SCITT  
Manager, Alliance for Learning**

## How have RIS participants impacted their school?



### Dr Ben Stutchbury (Biology teacher, 2018 cohort)

PhD thesis: 'Understanding how focal adhesion proteins sense and respond to mechanical signals', University of Manchester

Ben's Year 1 Uni Pathways course was 'How to make a glow-in-the-dark pet'. He has used his Research Leader in Education Day to **run a KS3 Science club for an hour each week**; the club attracts between 10-20 regular members. Ben also **organized for Essa Academy to be the first school in the North West to take part in the FameLab competition** set up by Cheltenham Science Festival.



### Dr Effy Evangelopoulou (Physics teacher, 2017 cohort)

PhD thesis: 'A novel footwear intervention to prolong the pain-free walking distance individuals with PADIC', University of Salford

Effy's Year 1 Uni Pathways course was 'Walking – it's trickier than you think'. Her Year 2 Uni Pathways course was 'How spaceships get to the moon... and students get to college'. Additionally, she has **designed information that showcases GCSE and A level requirements for different university courses** and displayed these around the school.



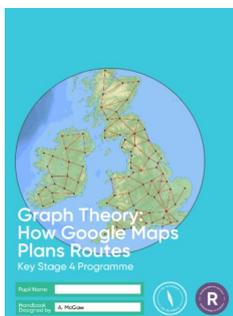
### Dr Alex McGaw (Maths teacher, 2018 cohort)

PhD thesis: 'On Certain Subgroups of E8(2) and Other Topics', University of Manchester

Alex's Year 1 Uni Pathways course was 'Graph Theory: How Google Maps Plans Routes'. On his Research Leader in Education Day, he has **run successful Year 11 intervention classes and Further Mathematics classes**. He has also **held UKMT intermediate (Y9-11) and junior (Y7-8) maths challenges for over 150 pupils**.

#### What is Uni Pathways?

In their first year of the programme, all participants deliver Uni Pathways: a university-style intervention for high-potential Year 9 students to improve their understanding of university and high-level academic study.



Participants design and deliver seven tutorials based on their PhD thesis and pupils write a final assignment which is graded using university grades.

*I have learned a lot, not just about genetic engineering but also practical skills like presenting, that I know I will use in the future. Also, I learned a lot about what I will study and how I will study in university*



Feedback from pupils  
with a RIS teacher

*I have learnt about what it is like to study at university. I now know how to write and reference an essay and present something to an audience*