Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Getting started

The following notes will enable you to encourage discussion around the different Unconscious Bias scenarios.

- Allow at least 45 minutes for this activity to enable a thorough exploration and discussion of the scenarios.
- Divide the participants into groups of three to four people.
- Randomly allocate each group two or three scenarios (depending on the number of groups you have).
- Allow 15 minutes at the end for a plenary session to enable a whole group feedback session on the scenarios.

Guidance for a successful discussion

The topic of unconscious bias can be challenging and evoke a range of emotions, some of the scenarios are deliberately provocative to stimulate discussion.

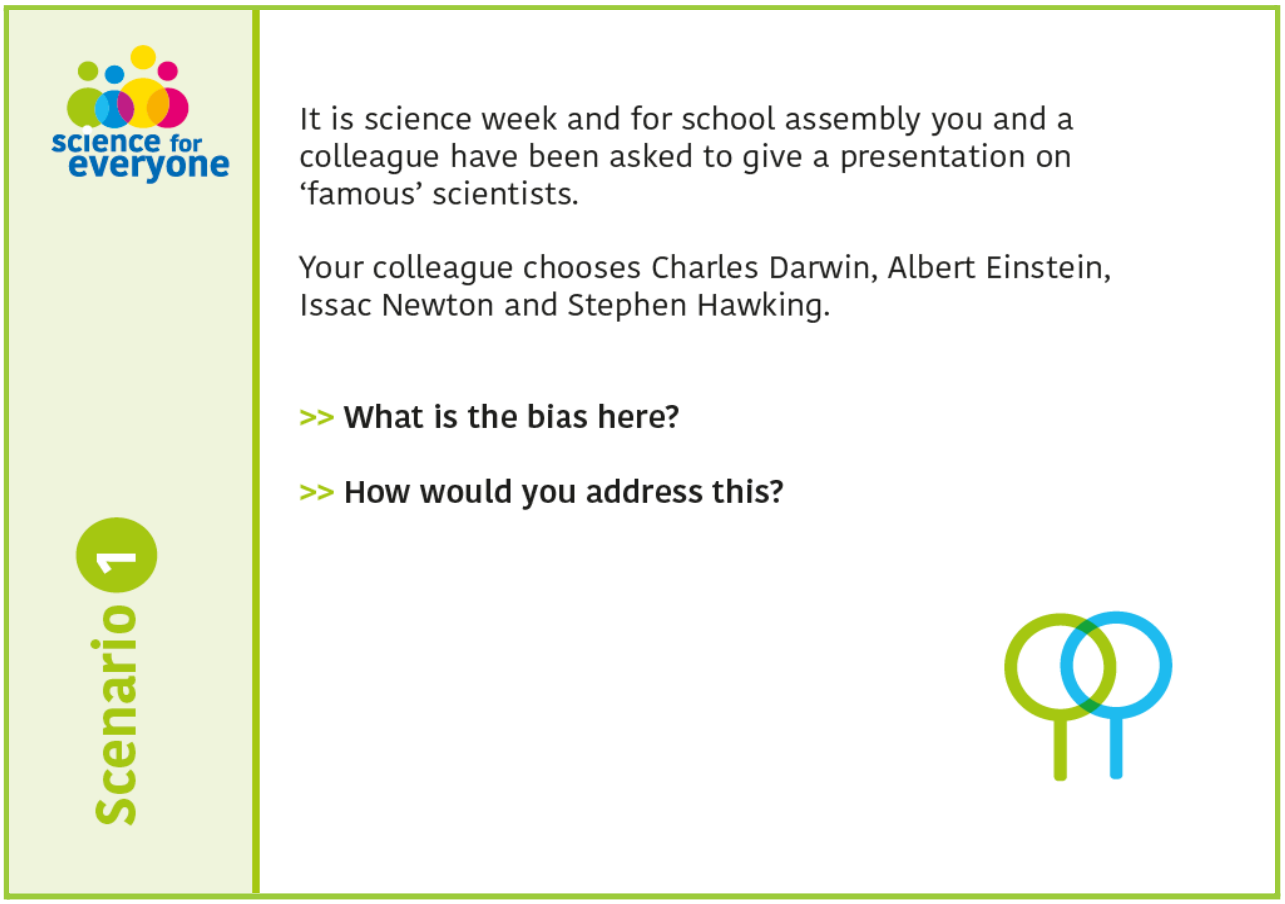
Before starting the discussions, remind the group that this is a safe space to express ideas and opinions. We want everyone to feel that they can express their opinions but if at any point you want to take a step back or take a break, please do so.

Encourage participants to follow these discussion guidelines

- Speak for yourself and not for others.
- Ensure everyone in the group has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion.
- Allow others to finish before you speak. Listen well.
- Ask questions as well as making statements.
- Explain what you think and feel.
- Respect differences in opinion. Find where you agree.
- Share your life experiences and knowledge – it is valuable.

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 1: Famous Scientists Assembly



Scenario one is not an uncommon one in school and reinforces the gender stereotype of male white scientists. To facilitate the group discussion ask some of the following questions:

- How might you address the fact that the suggested scientists are all white men?
- Which scientists might you suggest could be used instead?
- Why have you made those suggestions, what diversity do they bring to this situation?
- Are the examples now chosen diverse in terms of not only gender but other differences (e.g. Ethnicity, Nationality, historical period, scientific discipline)?
- How easy was it to think of non-white male scientists? If you struggled to think of alternative scientists, are there any actions you could take to address this?

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 1 continued

Key learning points:

- Think-Scientist-Think-Male is a strong cognitive association and one that is regularly reinforced in society so it is important that we offer many opportunities to balance out that association.

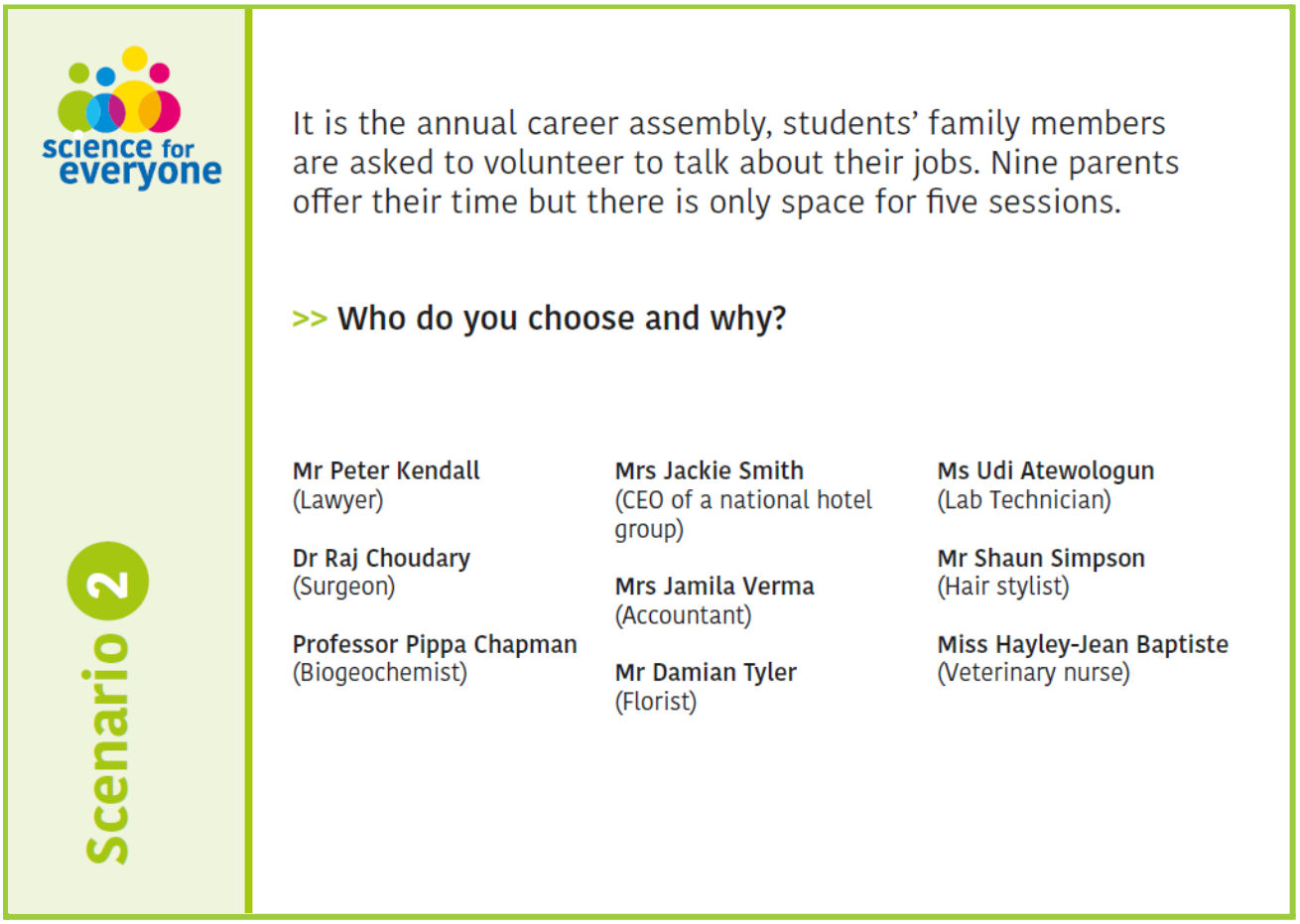
- This scenario raises the topic of diversity and inclusion. It is useful for the groups to think about how they define these terms.

- **Diversity** is the presence of difference within a given setting. These differences can be gender, ethnicity, age, social background, education, neurodiversity, disabilities etc.

- **Inclusion** is about people with different identities feeling and/or being valued, leveraged, and welcomed within a given setting. As a school you have a culture and environment where everyone has equal chances to participate.

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 2: Annual Careers Assembly



Scenario two addresses the use of diverse role models in school. This is a situation where affinity bias and gender stereotyping can play out. To facilitate the group discussion ask some of the following questions:

- Which parents would you invite into school and why?
- Which do you think would offer the most diverse view of different careers?
- Were there particular job roles you were drawn to first, why do you think that was?

Key learning points:

- There is a tendency for teachers to choose what they perceive as the most exciting, high profile or interesting job roles, but it is equally important to highlight diversity within roles, no matter what the level. This can be far more impactful in smashing stereotypes and making STEM roles relatable to students who may not see science or leadership as being for them.

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 3: Disruptive behaviour

Scenario 3

Your attention is drawn to a group of children in class who are disrupting other groups from working by pushing each other, using raised voices and generally messing about instead of working.

You have already had to tell them twice. The focus of attention of the group is Michael, the only Black boy in the group who is fairly new to the school.

>> **How might our biases impact on how we interpret this situation and how we deal with Michael?**

Scenario three highlights where confirmation bias can impact decision making, making assumptions based on stereotypes and filling in the gaps of missing information. To facilitate the group discussion ask some of the following questions:

- Have you been in a situation similar to this before?
- What biases do you think could affect your decision making in this situation?
- What other factors may affect your interpretation of the situation?
- What would the best course of action be in this situation and why?

Key learning points:

- The lack of experience with Michael makes us vulnerable to infilling missing information with stereotypes about black boys. The fact he may look different tends to draw our attention away from the behaviour of children who look more like us or we know better.

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 4: The tidying up conundrum

Scenario 4

Jackie, a Teaching Assistant, notices that the class teacher Mrs Lester, regularly asks the girls to tidy up the pencils and put them away. The boys are asked to do most of any moving of chairs and setting up equipment.

>> Is there a bias here?

>> If so, how does she raise it with Mrs Lester?

Scenario four highlights how unconscious bias can reinforce subtle gender-career stereotypes at an early age, which can have an impact on children's career aspirations.

To facilitate the group discussion ask some of the following questions:

- Have you been in a situation similar to this before?
- What unconscious biases do you think could be playing out here?
- If you were Jackie, what would you do? Would you feel comfortable addressing it?
- If Jackie came to you with this observation, what advice would you give her?

Key learning points:

- Gender-Career stereotypes impact our careers aspirations and work performance, and they are reinforced all of the time in the media and in culture.
- Polite challenge to the individual is a preference to formal reporting. It could be the individual does not even realise they are doing it.

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 5: Technology questions

Scenario 5

Year 5 teacher Ms Parrish is asked a question on ICT by a small group of boys, which she doesn't know the answer to.

Mr Ahmed is an NQT who has recently started in the school. Ms Parrish suggests they; "Ask Mr Ahmed, he is sure to know".

>> **Discuss this situation.**

>> **Why might Ms Parrish assume Mr Ahmed would know?**

Scenario five highlights how unconscious bias can reinforce gender and ethnicity stereotypes in an everyday situation. The use of careless language can also send unintended messages.

To facilitate the group discussion ask some of the following questions:

- What unconscious biases do you think could be playing out here?
- How do you think Mr Ahmed may feel about this situation?
- What messages could this situation be reinforcing with her comment (particularly for the girls in the class)?
- What would be a better way to deal with this situation?

Key learning points:

- Ethnicity and Gender role stereotypes impact our work performance and task allocation.
- This situation reinforces a gender and ethnicity stereotype.

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 6: Group work

Scenario 6

Your Year 4 students have the chance to enter a project into the Great Science Share Event. Students have to work in groups of three to design an investigation.

Groups quickly form into 'friendship' groups. You mix the groups up but notice in all but one that group boys take the lead in designing and talking about the experiment.

>> **What action might you take?**

Scenario six highlights the importance of group work and encouraging interactions between children of different backgrounds and genders. To facilitate the group discussion ask some of the following questions:

- How often do you mix up the students for group work?
- How often do boys take the lead in your classwork?
- Are there other issues that could come about through the mixing of groups?

Key learning points:

- Group formation is important. Positive contact with children less like themselves can help mitigate bias in children, but we have to manage that interaction so that it is a positive experience.
- Boys can be socialised into 'taking control' or 'leading' and girls into 'being nice'. We have opportunities to intervene in that socialisation process and should regularly rotate the leader role so everyone has the opportunity to develop key skills such as listening, communication as well as leadership.

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Scenario 7: Science celebrities

Scenario 7

A teacher is talking about different careers in science using celebrities to get the students' attention.

She shows images of TV doctor Raj Singh, inventor Elon Musk, anthropologist Alice Roberts, entrepreneur James Dyson, astronaut Tim Peake, physicist Brian Cox and TV presenter Sir David Attenborough.

>> **Discuss the examples**

>> **Which 7 celebrities would you choose?**

Scenario seven highlights the issue of diversity (or lack of) in science featured in the media and society. To facilitate the group discussion ask some of the following questions:

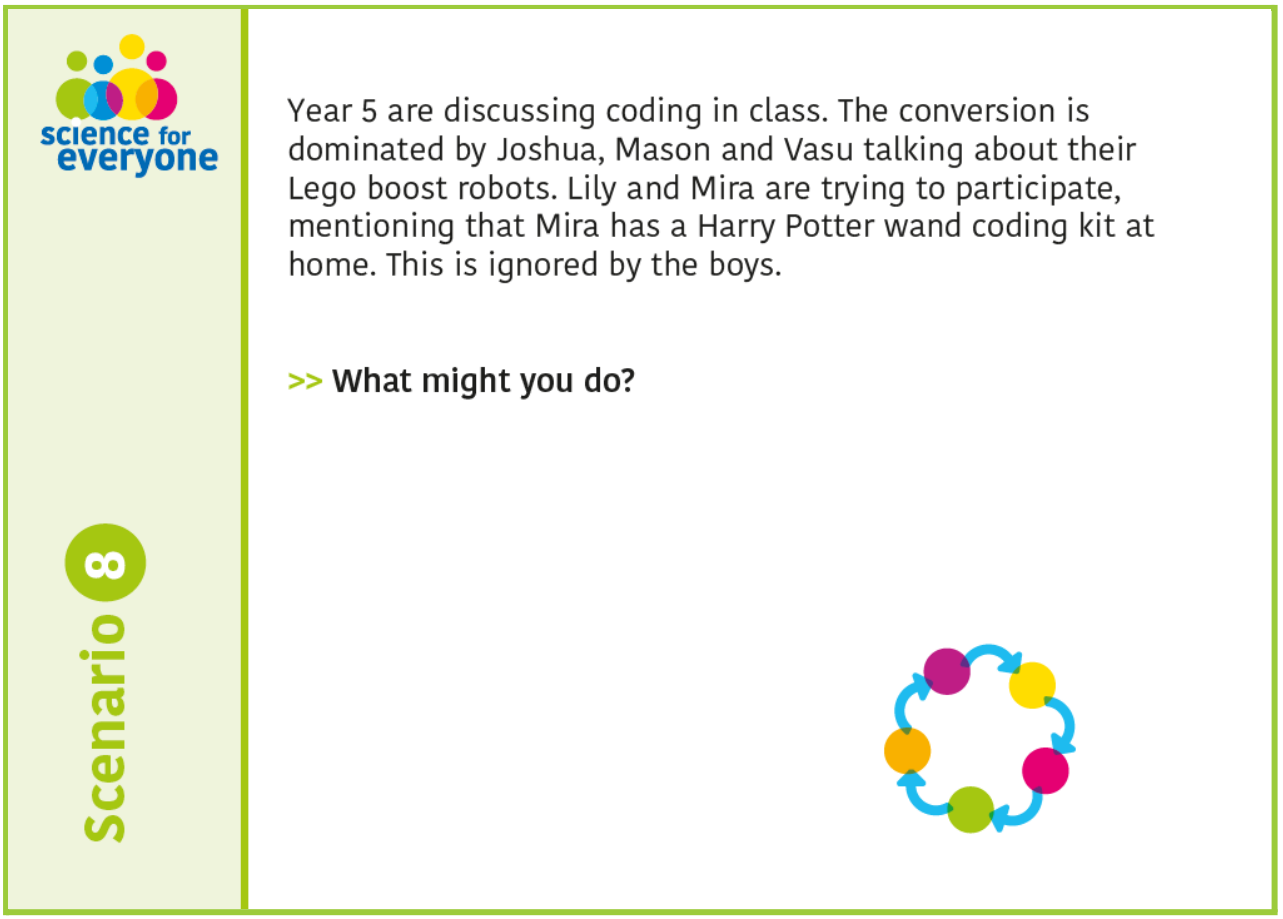
- Which "Science" celebrities would you choose?
- Why have you made those suggestions, what diversity do they bring to this situation?
- How easy was it to think of non-white celebrity scientists?

Key learning points:

- Think-Scientist-Think-Male is a strong cognitive association and one that is regularly reinforced in society so it is important that we offer many opportunities to balance out that association.
- If you can't think of other examples, you can balance this by commenting that there are lots of other scientists, male and female from a range of backgrounds who are not on the TV and do similar jobs.

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 8: Coding conversations



Scenario eight highlights how conversations can be dominated by individuals and this can reinforce stereotypes.

To facilitate the group discussion ask some of the following questions:

- Have you been in a situation like this before?
- What would you do in this situation to include Lily, Mira and other girls in the class into the conversation?
- Should you challenge the boys on their behaviour? How would you do this?
- What could be the impact on the girls if this situation goes unchallenged?

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 8 continued

Key learning points:

- Students can often behave in a biased manner, making assumptions around gender and technology. Unchallenged these assumptions will be reinforced.
- Gender stereotypes begin to emerge by the age of 7 and change little by the age of 17.
- Being excluded from the conversation reinforces the idea that science, and in this particular situation, coding ‘isn’t for girls’.

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 9: Bake-off club

Scenario 9

The parents and carers group propose that they will run an after school club capitalising on the interest in baking; 'Bake-Off Club'. They draw up a poster to advertise the club showing girls and a mother in the kitchen making cupcakes.

>> **How might you address this with the parents, who argue it reflects the reality at home?**

Scenario nine highlights how gender-career associations can be reinforced with schools through the wider school ecosystem such as parent and carer associations. To facilitate the group discussion ask some of the following questions:

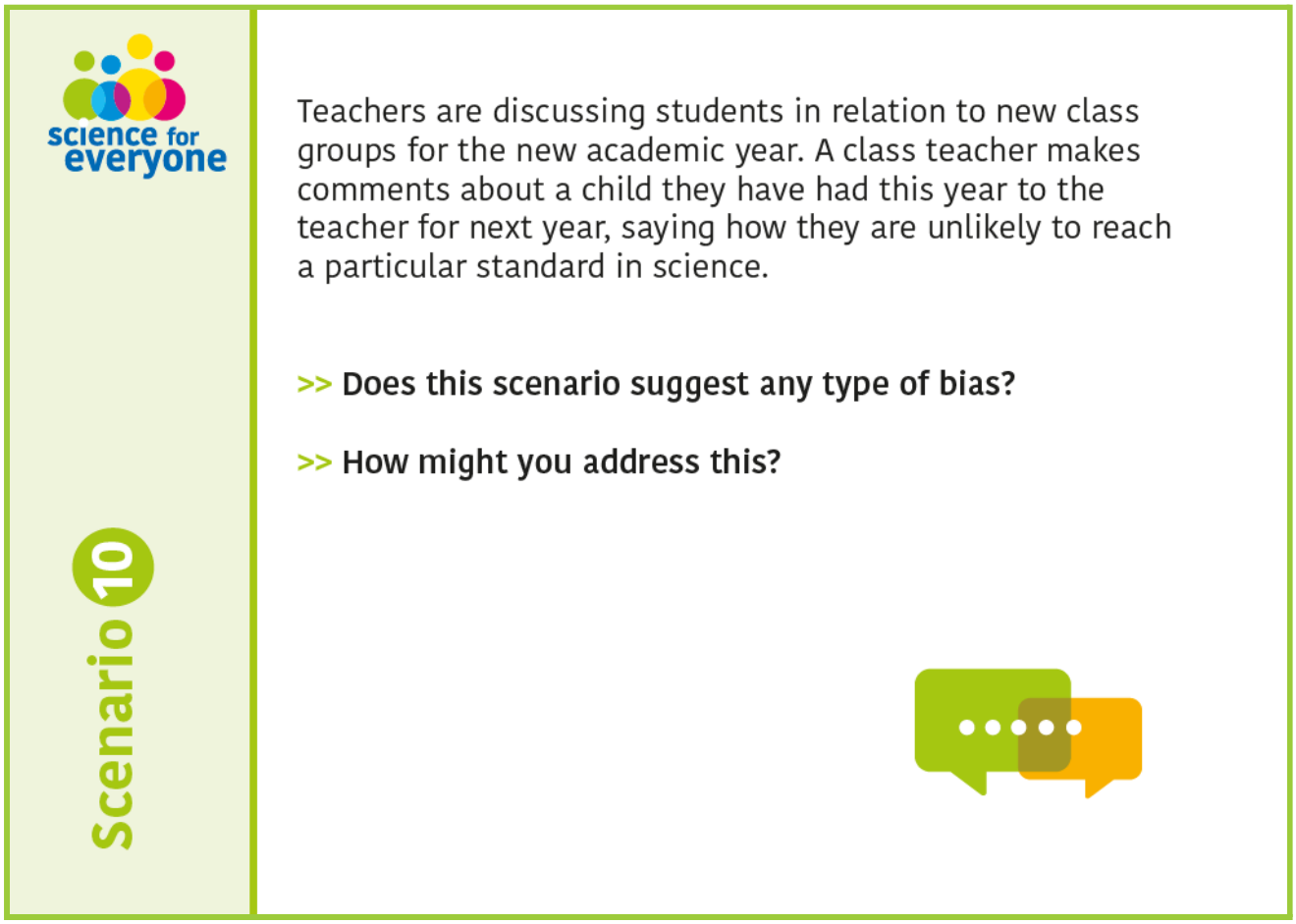
- Would you challenge this situation in your school?
- Who in the school could feel excluded by the imagery?
- How would you challenge this situation with the parents?
- What inclusive imagery would you suggest instead?

Key learning points:

- Some parents can hold commonly held gender bias which should be challenged to prevent the Homemaker stereotype being reinforced.
- Gender-Career associations permeate society, but this does not make them 'right'. Gender roles have become culturally socialised. It may also exclude some children who do not have female role models at home (e.g. single parent father or gay parents).

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 10: Moving classes



Scenario 10 highlights how commenting on children can lead to expectations that can reinforce some biases. To facilitate the group discussion ask some of the following questions:

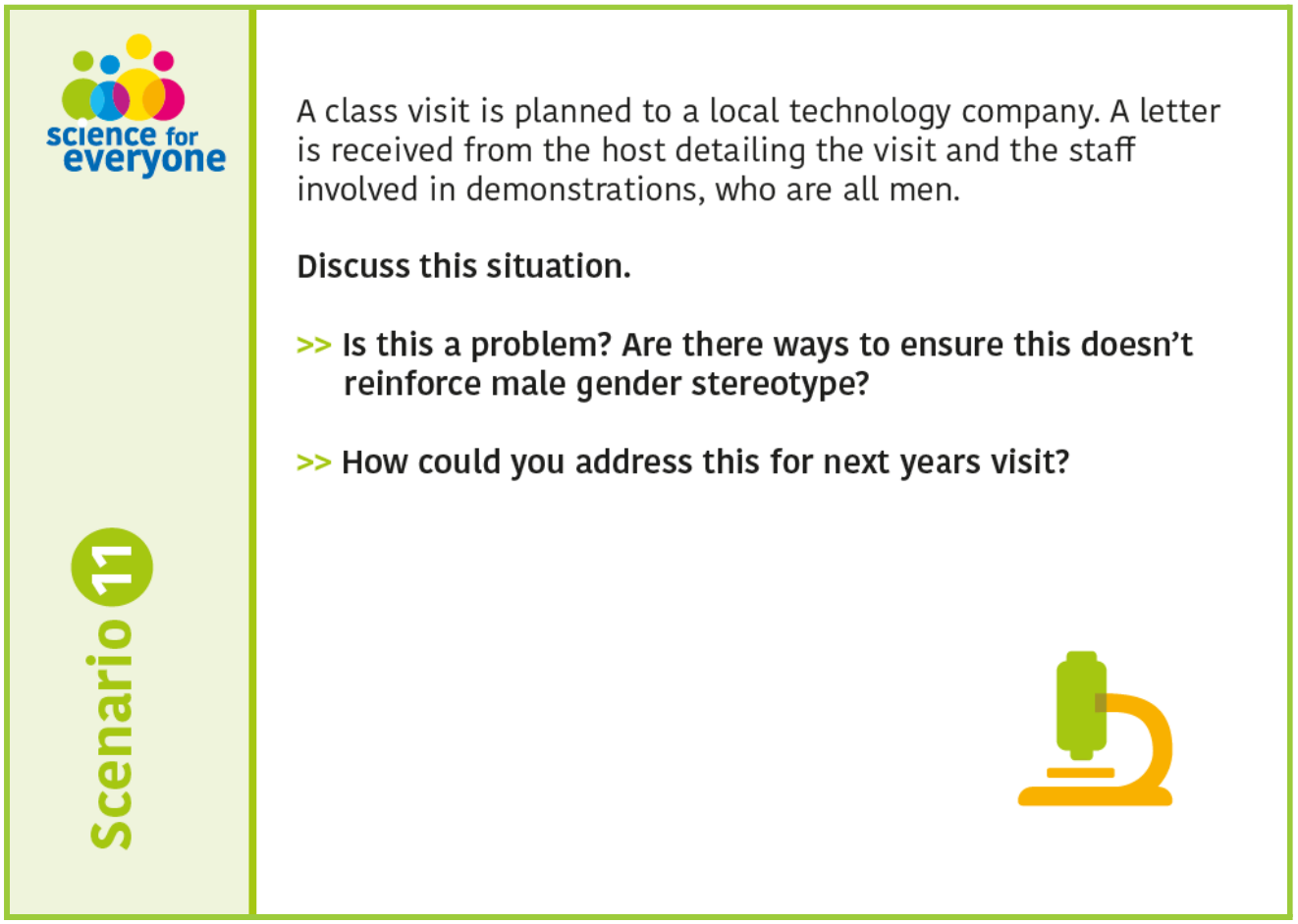
- Have you been in a situation like this? Did it lead to you having expectations of pupils (intentional or unintentional)?
- Handovers are commonplace, how could you present information about students without causing bias in others?
- What other exchanges of information about students or the students family could mitigate bias?

Key learning points:

- Talking about the expectations for children can reinforce Confirmation Bias and some sources of information (colleagues) can produce expectations we then don't seek to test (Source Bias).

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 11: School science visit



Scenario 11 highlights the potential for school visits to reinforce stereotypes.

To facilitate the group discussion ask some of the following questions:

- Is having an all-male led school visit an issue?
- Are there ways to ensure this doesn't reinforce male gender stereotypes?
- What suggestions would you make to address this for future visits?
- Do girls have to see female role models to feel that science is for them?
- How can male role models make themselves relatable to girls?
- What other potential biases could be reinforced?

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 11 continued

Key learning points:

- Having limited female role models can have an impact in reinforcing gender-career stereotyping.
- Role modelling is critical in stimulating STEM interest amongst girls. Not seeing people like them can also trigger a Stereotype Threat, causing them to withdraw interest because people like them don't belong in that area.
- It's interesting/important that whilst female role models can encourage girls to feel that science is 'for them', role models can also form through other shared characteristics and interests. Having a group of all men isn't ideal, but asking them to talk a little bit about their personal life or hobbies might allow more girls to associate with them, despite the gender barrier.
- Sometimes there's a push for showcasing lots of feminine women who work in STEM (which is great!) but it means that any girls who already feel left out from the 'girly girl' group still lack access to a role model. Sharing interests and other personal life information can begin to address that.

Scenario Discussion Facilitator notes

Scenario 12: Recruitment

Scenario 12

The school is recruiting for a Teaching Assistant. There is one male applicant, Jason, a man in his 30's with a background in business finance.

In discussion around the table during shortlisting, comments are made and questions are asked about his motivation to want to work with children, and the fact the TA salary won't probably support a family.

>> **How might you challenge these comments?**

This scenario highlights how bias can creep into recruitment processes.

To facilitate the group discussion ask some of the following questions:

- Have you been in a similar situation?
- What assumptions are being made here? What biases are playing out?
- Would you challenge these comments? If so, how?
- What suggestions would you make to address recruitment policies to mitigate against bias?

Key learning points:

- Assumptions about the motivations for men in primary teaching can lead to their de-selection.
- Gender role stereotypes can also lead us to assume family roles (e.g. bread-winner).