

March 2020

The Space Zone was a themed zone for primary schools, funded by STFC. There were six scientists taking part in the zone:

- Samantha Faircloth is a PhD student studying elements from moon rocks, funded by STFC.
- Sam Frampton is an STFC funded PhD student designing new, smaller satellites to visit and study other planets in our solar system.
- Nicol Caplin is a Science Coordinator at ESA helping to plan experiments ready to go to space on the International Space Station.
- Lori-Ann Foley is a PhD student looking how climate change affects Mars, using data from RAL Space instruments.
- Liam Perera is an STFC funded PhD student looking how life may survive on Saturn's icy moon - Enceladus.
- David Sobral, winner of the Space Zone, uses microscopes to research how galaxies formed and evolved from the primitive universe, funded by STFC.

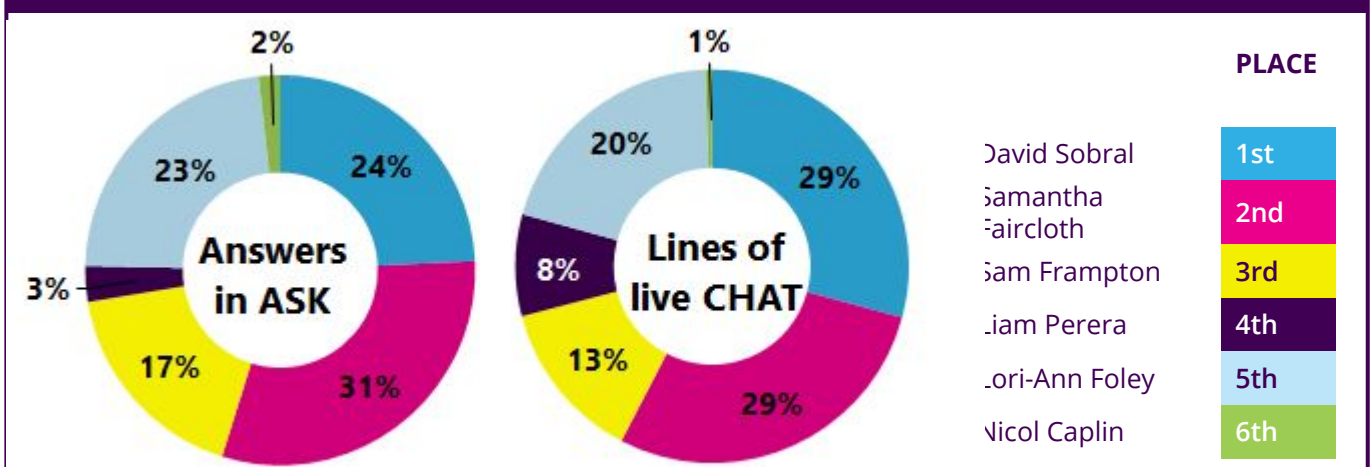
Key figures

This zone had the highest number of students logged in, the highest number of questions asked and approved, and the highest number of live chats out of all the March 2020 zones.

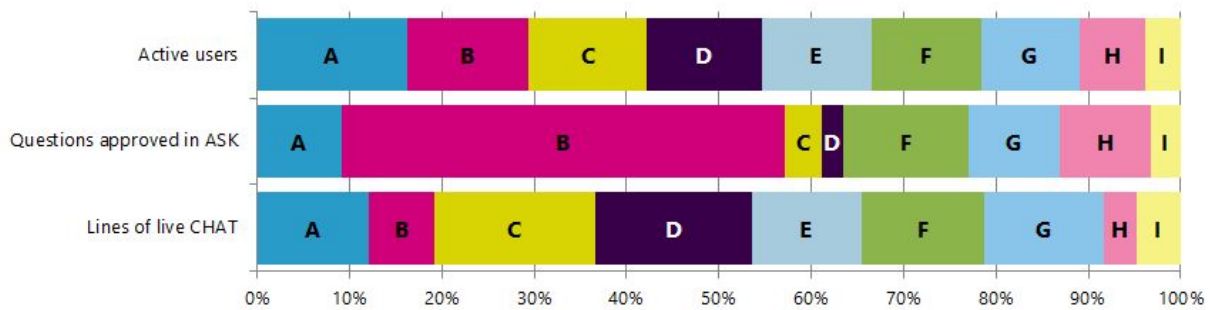
Due to the effects of coronavirus, many schools reported a large number of staff and student absences, which had an impact on their participation in the second week. Students could still access the chat from home so we still opened bookings, but there were a lower number of chats than we would normally see, and they were quieter on average.

	SPACE ZONE	MAR '20 ZONES AVERAGE	2012-19 ZONES AVERAGE
Schools	9	7	10
Students logged in	451	300	385
% of students active in ASK, CHAT, VOTE, or comments	91%	86%	87%
Questions asked	463	251	637
Questions approved	252	154	284
Answers given	507	287	512
Comments	48	27	66
Votes	361	204	301
Live chats	23	14	16
Lines of live chat	8978	4869	5,722
Average lines per chat	390	358	357

Scientist activity



School activity



		YEAR GROUP(S)	CLASSES
A	Holy Trinity CE VC Primary School, Weymouth (WP/U)	3	3
B	St Peter's Primary School, London	3,4	2
C	Creswell Junior School, Worksop (WP/U)	5	3
D	Brompton-Westbrook Primary School, Gillingham (WP/U)	5,6	4
E	Gunton Primary Academy, Lowestoft (WP/U)	5,6	3
F	Irchester Community Primary School, Wellingborough	5	2
G	Mill O'Forest School, Aberdeenshire (U)	6	2
H	Richard Taylor CE Primary School, Harrogate (U)	5	1
I	Whittington CE Primary School, Worcester (U)	4	1

We have found that schools that are more than 30 minutes travel time from their closest Higher Education Institution are less likely to receive visits and benefit from engagement activities. We give priority to underserved (U) and widening participation (WP) schools when allocating places. Find out more about our research at <https://about.imascientist.org.uk/2017/school-engagement-in-stem-enrichment-effect-of-school-location/>

Popular topics

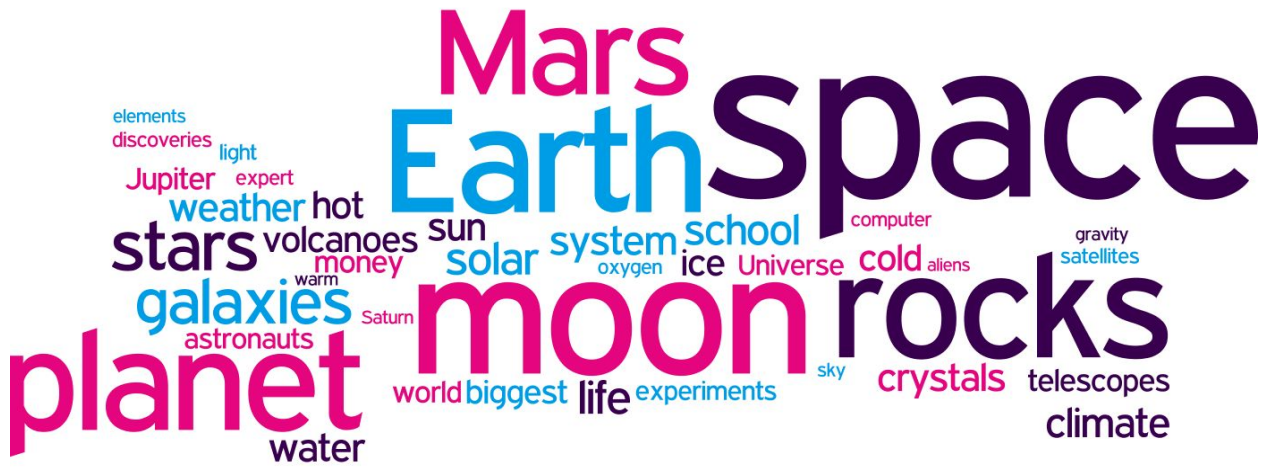
Discussions in the Space Zone were very on topic, and students were interested in each of the scientists' research areas.

There were many questions to Samantha about space rocks, including how she got the rocks, and what rocks she had found, and questions to Lori-Ann about whether there is life on Mars.

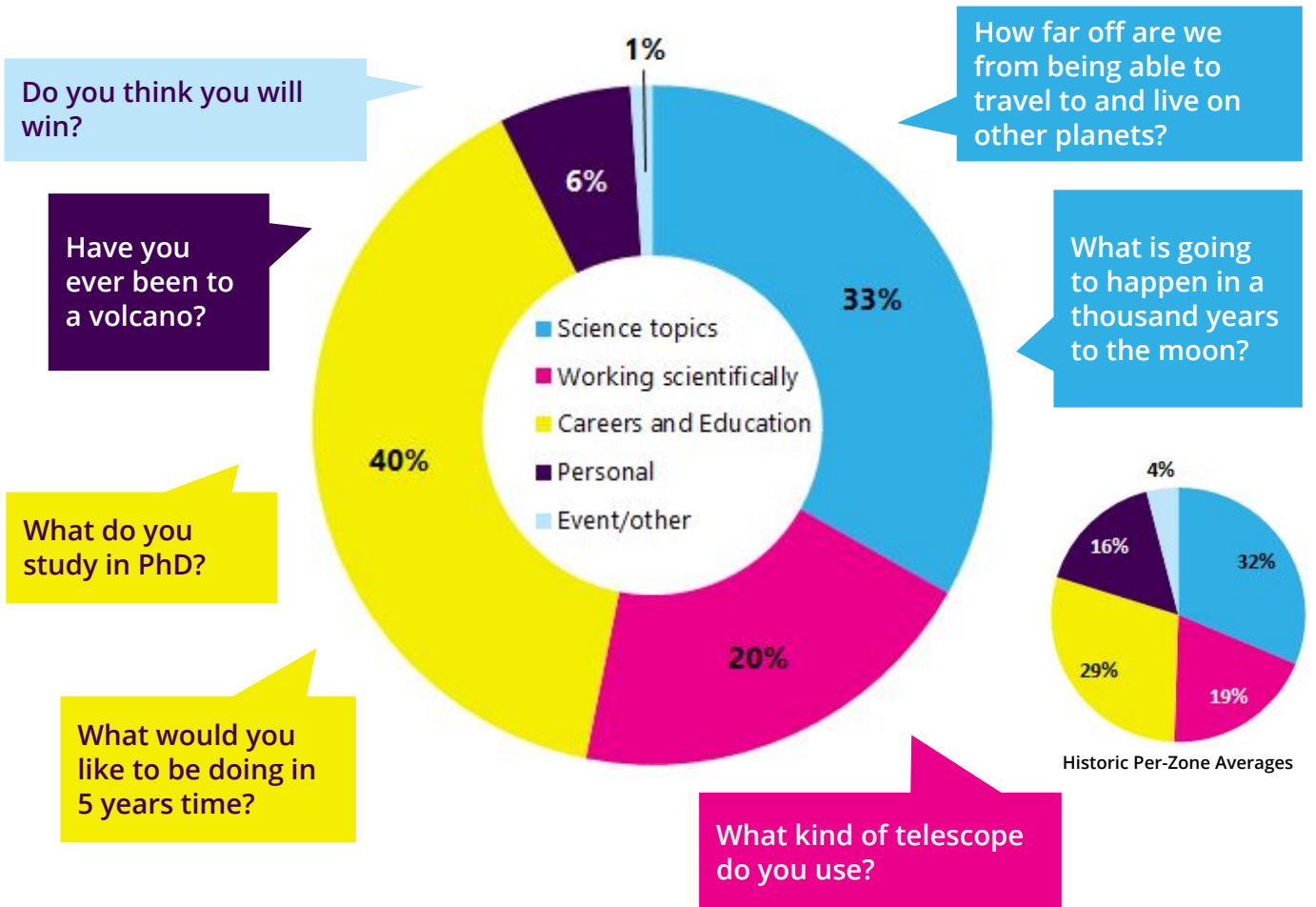
Many questions were also about general space themes, including planets and stars, and whether we would be able to live on other planets.

Students also asked about the scientists interests, video games, and their favourite things to do in their free time.

Frequent words used in live chats by students and scientists



Question themes and example questions in the Zone



Examples of good engagement

There were great conversations in the chats about satellites, and the scientists were good at encouraging the students to share their own opinions:

maze396web: @Sam: What is your favorite satellite [Reply](#)

Sam: @maze396web: Good question! I think it's the voyager satellites, which is the only thing humans have built that have left the solar system. Do you have a favourite satellite? [Reply](#)

maze396web: @Sam: CALIPSO and Sputnik 1 [Reply](#)

Sam: @maze396web: Sputnik is a classic! Good choice :) [Reply](#)

maze396web: @Sam: I have heard that one satellites plays music [Reply](#)

David: @maze396web: The car sent to space was playing David Bowie "Life on Mars." in space [Reply](#)

maze396web: @David: nice [Reply](#)

David: @maze396web: I thought it was super cool. And also that inside the car there are things like "made by humans on Earth" :) [Reply](#)

maze396web: @David: yeah same hear [Reply](#)

This question in ASK from a student about the importance of communication prompted great answers from the scientists, and shows students that there are skills they might use in lots of other scenarios that are vital to science:

"How important is communication in the realm of scientific discovery?" - Student

"Incredibly important. Communication is what makes data and some thoughts become "a discovery" and have much deeper meaning. Without communication scientific discoveries have little to no value to society. I am also a stronger advocate of all science being always fully public, including all data and outcomes." - David, Scientist

"Communication is really, really important. If you make a discovery, other scientists need to hear about it, so they can test your work and see if it relates to theirs and affects it. Plus just knowing new things is really important to everyone. And communication is really important these days because often the teams working on projects are in different places and they need to talk to each other to organise their work and check results and publish their papers. So learning to communicate is one of the key skills of being a scientist. Also scientists needs to be able to communicate with the general public, so they understand what the latest discoveries are and their impact on people. And that's why scientists and students taking part in projects like this is so important, because students who might want to be scientists can then talk to people working in their fields to find out what it is really like." - Lori-Ann, Scientist

"Hello Astro, it is incredibly important. If scientists communicate and collaborate to help each other then more discoveries are made and we have a better understanding of science! 😊" - Samantha, Scientist



Scientist winner: David Sobral

David's plans for the prize money: *"I would get the XGAL-DYI activities to many more students and curious people world-wide - so more people can use real data from the best telescopes to understand how discoveries are made and then do their own discoveries. Oh, and do more of these activities and youtube videos!"*

Read David's [thank you message](#)

Student winner: item396pie

As the student winner, item396pie will receive a certificate and a gift voucher.

Feedback

We're still collecting feedback from teachers, students and scientists but here are a few of the comments made about March's *I'm a Scientist*...

All our students have thoroughly enjoyed the experience, learned a lot and had something positive to cling to this past week
— Teacher

I would highly recommend I'm A Scientists to my colleagues, as I had an incredible experience. The ability for high school students to ask questions (including some real tough ones) directly is a fantastic outreach tool, and I feel privileged to have taken part.
— Scientist

I think this is a pretty unique method of science engagement! You get the chance to get to know and help some of the students, particularly in the evening chats!
— Scientist

Thank you for answering every question no matter what the challenge!
— Student

This has been really useful. Thank you for taking time to answer us! :)
— Student

Thank you for giving up the time and answering our questions you have informed us with a lot of cool and amazing information
— Student