



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – Tuesday 29 September

***The Times* Spelling Bee is back and open for registration!**



After the phenomenal success of the inaugural 2009 *Times* Spelling Bee, the UK's only national spelling competition for schools is back!

Visit www.timesspellingbee.co.uk and register before the 4 December 2009.

In 2009 more than 750 middle and secondary schools from across the UK took part. After the excitement of the local heats and semi-finals, 10 schools remained to take part in the glittering Grand Final in London's West End. The nail-biting event resulted in St Martin's School from Northwood being crowned winners and they consequently received celebrity status of their own after they appeared on the front page of *The Times*. Describing the day as 'the best time of our lives' the team also appeared in numerous national television and radio interviews the following day.

The aim of the Championship is to make spelling fun, help teachers raise the profile of spelling and develop the talents of their students. With *proselytise*, *garrotte*, *idiosyncrasy* and *chiaroscuro* proving to be some of the toughest words to spell in the 2009 competition, 2010 is set to be a challenge for all competing teams!

The Championship begins in March 2010 when schools go head to head in live local knockout spelling heats. The winning teams will then progress to the Semi-Finals which will take place in May and the Grand Final will be held in London in June 2010. The deadline for schools to enter is Friday, December 4, 2009.

The Times, with *Collins*, official dictionary of *The Times* Spelling Bee, has already got people of all ages interested in spelling with the launch of the Spelling Bee website. It has spelling games and puzzles for adults and school children alike, and new and exciting features include a head-to-head challenge which allows players to play against one another: www.timesspellingbee.co.uk.

James Harding, Editor of *The Times*, said: "After the success of the first ever *Times* national spelling bee, we are thrilled to be hosting the competition for the second year running. One of the many things we learnt from the inaugural year was that spelling can be great fun and thanks to the outstanding spelling skills of our contestants in 2009 we have a very high standard to beat this year. I wish all the teams taking part in the 2010 competition the very best of luck."

Elaine Higgleton, Editorial Director of *Collins* Dictionaries, says: "*The Times* Spelling Bee makes spelling fun, and children learn so much more from it than just how to spell some rather difficult words. I was very impressed by the confidence and presentational skills of the children taking part in 2009, and above all by the great sense of fair play and sporting attitude towards competitors that were in evidence during every stage of the competition."

Susie Dent, lexicographer on *Countdown*, says: "It's about time that spelling made a comeback and became a bit of fun and not just a chore!"

The Times Spelling Bee is supported by Ed Balls, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families. Celebrities who supported the 2009 competition include Jamie

Theakston, Harriet Scott, Miquita Oliver, Rick Edwards, Andi Peters, Susie Dent, Matt Littler, Darren Jeffries and Justin Somper.

The Times is a committed supporter of standards of English and a respected commentator on educational matters. *The Times* Spelling Bee is one of a series of nationwide initiatives to help inspire children and support teachers. For more information, how schools can enter and a review and brief video of the 2009 Championship which gives a flavour of the fun team format, visit:

www.timesspellingbee.co.uk

- Ends -

Notes to Editors

- For further information and to arrange interviews and competitions to win *Collins* dictionaries contact Catherine Duncan and Kiri Gillespie at Colman Getty on 0207 631 2666 or catherine@colmangetty.co.uk or kiri@colmangetty.co.uk
- *Collins* is the official dictionary of the *Times* Spelling Bee and the Word List for the local championship heats and Semi-Finals will be based on Collins dictionaries, especially the *Collins School Dictionary*. The *Collins School Dictionary* was compiled with the assistance of teachers specifically for children aged 11-13. The range of word difficulty in the Word List has been validated by teachers as being a good progression from easy to challenging and appropriate for 11-12 year-old children.
- The 2010 Spelling Bee Championship is open to full-time pupils in schools in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland who will turn 12 years old between September 1, 2009, and August 31, 2010. Schools can register to enter the Championship by telephone, email, or by visiting the Times Spelling Bee website online

Telephone 0208 973 0046
Email Spellingbee@rapportgroup.com
Online www.timesspellingbee.co.uk

- The deadline for schools to enter is Friday, December 4, 2009. Schools will need to submit the names of their team members by Friday, February 12, 2010.
- Since launching in October 21 2008, the site has received 2,495,844 page views, 20,432 signed up players (447 teachers, 9,041 students, 4,224 under 18s, 6,720 over 18s) and 1,501,589 games played.
- The 2009 Spelling Bee Champions were; Jonah Surkes, Dylan Amin, Prahalad Prasad and Gordon Hao from St Martin's School in Northwood.