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VOICEBOX

AWARDS
2026

Information for
Teachers and Schools

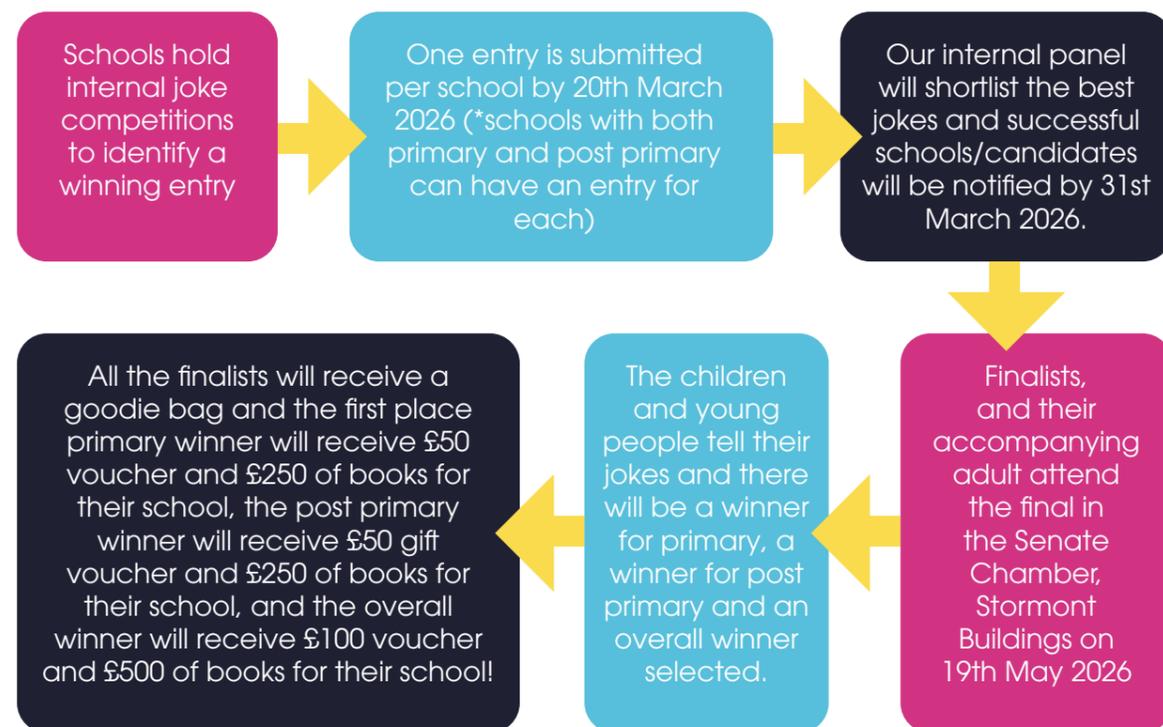
What is VoiceBox?

VoiceBox is a national joke competition for school children developed by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT), designed to raise awareness of the joy and importance of communication. It is a fun way to share serious messages about how we can enhance the speech, language, and communication skills of all children, so they can thrive in education, improve their wellbeing, and experience a positive future.



All schools in Northern Ireland are invited to nominate one joke from their school for the 2026 VoiceBox Awards. There are 2 categories – Primary and Post-Primary (2 entries are accepted where applicable for joined primary & post primary schools). An internal panel will shortlist the best jokes and the finalists will be invited, along with one parent/guardian or teacher, to the prestigious Senate Chamber in Stormont Buildings on 19th May 2026. We are delighted that the Speaker of the NI Assembly Mr Edwin Poots is sponsoring this event! At the final event, participants will tell their jokes to a panel of judges and an audience of MLAs and guests, competing for the chance to win some exciting prizes sponsored by Harper Collins.

Timeline



Why take part in VoiceBox?

VoiceBox offers an opportunity to focus on the fun aspects of communication and build children and young people's communication and confidence. It's also a fun activity to get pupils enthused in the early months of the new year!

Prizes

All finalists attending the National Final will receive a prize.

Additional prizes will be awarded to the three winners (1. primary, 2. post-primary, 3. Overall winner) the primary and post primary winners will receive a £50 gift card and £250 worth of books for their school, the overall winner will receive £100 gift card and £500 worth of books for their school.



Improve pupils' communication skills

Telling a joke is not only fun, but also a highly advanced linguistic skill! It involves inference, receptive and expressive language, and auditory memory.

Through VoiceBox, pupils can practise communication while keeping listeners engaged and delivering the punchline effectively. Preparing for the competition encourages them to think carefully about language, audience and delivery.

Practising at home can also involve families in a fun and meaningful way, and pupils can take part in judging or voting for their school's nomination.

Designed to be inclusive & accessible for pupils with a wide range of needs & communication styles

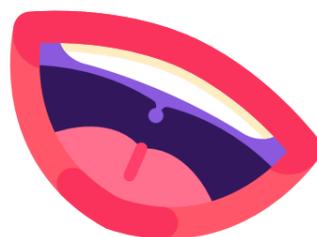
VoiceBox is an inclusive activity suitable for pupils of all abilities. We strongly encourage pupils of all abilities to take part. Children and young people who communicate in different ways are very welcome to join in and share their joke in the way that works best for them.

Schools may wish to support a small group of pupils with SEN to run their own mini VoiceBox competition as part of classroom or group activities, with support from teachers or classroom assistants. Local speech and language therapists may also be able to help schools include children with communication needs and ensure everyone can participate.

Engaging pupils in learning about the democratic process

With the final event being hosted by the Speaker of the NI Assembly in the Senate Chamber in Stormont, VoiceBox can be used as a great way to introduce a discussion about what the NI Assembly does and how MLAs are elected to represent their local area.

Who is VoiceBox for?



VoiceBox is open to children from Primary 1 up to Year 14. Children and young people from all backgrounds are encouraged to take part. Children and young people do not need to be confident public speakers or have any prior experience of performing. VoiceBox is about building communication skills in an inclusive and supportive way, whatever a child or young person's starting point.

At previous competitions, we've seen a wide range of creative and engaging contributions, using different communication styles and approaches, including the use of communication aids.

The only requirement is that pupils can take part in the National Final if their school's nominated joke is shortlisted. With your support, we will ensure that appropriate adaptations are in place so that all shortlisted pupils can participate fully.

Benefits to your school

If your school's nominated joke is shortlisted to compete in the National Final, your pupil will get the chance to represent your school, attend the final at Stormont Buildings, meet with MLAs and appear in the media.



Where travel costs would otherwise prevent participation, we will work with schools to explore what support may be available for the pupil and an accompanying adult to attend the National Final.

The overall winner will receive £500 worth of books for their school and the primary and post primary winners will receive £250 worth of books for their school.

VoiceBox offers a great platform to showcase your school to your local community and elected representatives.

How can we get involved?

Your school can choose how to run its own VoiceBox competition to suit your pupils. You may just have one pupil who is keen to enter, or you may feel it would suit a particular class or year group. You may want to open it up to your whole school. The deadline for entries is 20 March 2026. You can submit your school's entry [here](#):

Please note that we will only accept one entry from each school to be considered for the National Final (unless your school and both primary and post primary sections and you can enter once for each).

VoiceBox Toolkit

Below are links to lots of additional resources your school can use to run a VoiceBox competition.

You can access the toolkit at

<https://www.rcslt.org/northern-ireland/voicebox-northern-ireland-2026/>

The toolkit includes:

1. A4 VoiceBox poster

Invite pupils to join in VoiceBox by putting posters up around your school.

[Click here to download the poster.](#)



2. Letter to parents

If you need to inform parents that their child is taking part in VoiceBox our letter tells them everything they need to know about the competition and why your school is taking part. Fill in the details for your school on the form and copy and paste the text onto school letterhead or into an email.

[Click here to download.](#)



3. Participant certificate

Wrap up your VoiceBox competition by presenting each pupil with a certificate for taking part. Just print out the certificate and fill in the pupil's name in the space provided.

[Click here to download a certificate template.](#)



FAQs



Who are the RCSLT?

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists is a membership organisation, representing around 800 speech and language therapists in Northern Ireland and just over 22,000 across the UK. VoiceBox is a great way for us to celebrate the importance of communication and highlight this to MLAs and other decision-makers.

How many entries can I submit?

Each school can only submit one entry. However, if a school has both primary and post-primary settings, then that school will be able to submit one entry for each setting. Entries can be submitted [here](#)

What format should I submit the jokes in?

Jokes can be submitted in written, audio or video format. All entries will be reviewed by internal judges.

What sort of jokes can the pupils tell?

The children can tell jokes about anything they want – we'd love to see lots of creativity! However, please make sure the jokes are age appropriate and ideally no longer than 1 minute. However reasonable adjustments can be made as required. Bear in mind that jokes will have to be performed in front of a live audience at the final.

Can I post about VoiceBox on social media?

Yes! We'd love to see how your school is getting involved in VoiceBox. Our social media handles are: IG - [@rcslt_northernireland](#) [@rcslt](#)

When using social media, please remember to tag our relevant handles and use the hashtag [#VoiceBox2026](#)

Will the pupils' entries be posted on social media or other online media?

Yes we will post entries from our finalists with parent/guardian permission.

We will have a professional photographer taking photos throughout the day and we can share photos of your finalist with parents/teachers after the competition.

How many people can accompany each finalist?

Unfortunately, due to capacity in the Senate Chamber, only one adult can accompany each finalist. If a child or young person needs more than one adult because, please contact us ahead of the final.

Will you support with travel costs to get to the final?

Where travel costs would otherwise prevent participation, we will work with schools / parents to explore what support may be available for the pupil and an accompanying adult to attend the National Final.

How can I find out more about the final?

Once we have selected the finalists, we will contact the shortlisted schools and pupils via email with more details.

Where are the terms and conditions?

Our terms and conditions are found [here](#).

I have a question that wasn't answered here.

No problem! Contact us on voiceboxni@rcslt.org or visit [RCSLT website VoiceBox](#) to find out more.



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