**Template Press Release**

[Insert Date]

**[INSERT NAME OF MP] BACKS JOKE COMPETITION FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS AIMED AT IMPROVING CHILDREN’S COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

[Insert name of MP] is supporting Voice Box, an annual joke-telling competition designed by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) to build schoolchildren’s communication skills. This year’s competition is being run in partnership with NAHT (National Association of Head Teachers).

Over 10% of children start school with some form of language disorder. Undetected or unmet speech, language and communication problems can lead to low levels of literacy, poor educational attainment, poorer mental health and wellbeing and, in turn, difficulties finding employment, and life chances.

Mainstream and specialist primary schools across England, Scotland and Northern Ireland are invited to bring laughter into their classrooms this autumn by taking part in the competition. Schools should hold their joke-telling contests between October and November and then submit their pupil’s funniest joke to the RCSLT by 29 November for a chance to go through to a grand final in London, next year.

The pupil with the ultimate winning joke will receive an iPad mini, while two runners-up will each receive gift tokens.

The RCSLT has developed a toolkit with useful resources, ideas and a nomination form for schools to download via www.rcslt.org/giving-voice

[Insert quote from MP]

RCSLT CEO, Kamini Gadhok MBE, says: “The aim of the Voice Box competition is to remind people that all children need support to build their communication skills and confidence and some need additional specialist help to speak and understand what is being said to them.

“Communication is a fundamental skill and has the most profound and positive impact on our lives – from our social and emotional development to our behaviour, learning and educational attainment, employment prospects and life chances. It impacts on how we interact with other people, how we understand them and, in turn, how we are understood.”**Notes to Editors**

* Over 10% of children start school with some form of language disorder.
* Speech and language therapists work with children, their families and other professionals, such as teachers, to support children’s speech, language and communication needs, enabling them to reach their full potential.

**About the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists**

The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists (RCSLT) is the professional body for speech and language therapists in the UK, representing over 17,000 members. It facilitates and promotes research into the field of speech and language therapy – the care for individuals with communication, swallowing, eating and drinking difficulties. It promotes better education and training of speech and language therapists and is responsible for setting and maintaining high standards in education, clinical practice and ethical conduct. For more information on RCSLT and its Giving Voice campaign visit [www.rcslt.org](http://www.rcslt.org)

**About NAHT**

[NAHT](http://www.naht.org.uk/) represents more than 30,000 school leaders in early years, primary, secondary and special schools, making us the largest association for school leaders in the UK. We represent, advise and train school leaders in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. We use our voice at the highest levels of government to influence policy for the benefit of leaders and learners everywhere. Our [NAHT Edge](https://www.nahtedge.org.uk/) section supports, develops and represents middle leaders in schools. For more information on NAHT and NAHT Edge visit <https://www.naht.org.uk/> and <https://www.naht.org.uk/naht-edge/>