

press release

7 September 2009

Schools given the chance to win £750 to invest in stock market

- Pupils given the opportunity to invest real money in the stock market
- Schools can keep any profits made at the end of the competition
- Registration for 2009/10 competition closes on 25 September

Retail stockbroker, The Share Centre is offering schools across the country the chance to win £750 sponsorship to take part in its national investment competition, Shares4Schools.

Shares4Schools is now entering its seventh year with the 2009/10 competition due to start in October 2009. The competition aims to bring economic and business studies to life by giving Year 12 students the opportunity to invest real money in the stock market.

Each team must start with £1,500, with the aim of achieving the highest portfolio value over the period October to June. The Share Centre is offering a number of £750 sponsorships to help schools get started. At the end of the competition schools get to keep any profits they make.

Last year 49 schools took part in Shares4Schools. Wellingborough School, Northamptonshire won the 2008/09 competition with a whopping 134% profit, leaving them with £3523.29 to spend on resources and school projects.

Commenting on how the team decided to spend their winnings, David Williams, deputy head of Wellingborough School, said: "We're delighted we won. The team made £3,523 in just eight months and certainly had fun spending the profits. They donated £1,500 to next year's team and bought a flat screen television for the school's coffee shop. They gave the rest of the money to a Romanian orphanage, which students had chosen as one of the school's charities."

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Given the 'credit crunch', banking crisis and ensuing market volatility, there's never been a more exciting time to find out how the stock market works. However, without real-world experience, students can find getting to grips with personal finance quite a challenge.

Explaining the educational benefits of the competition, Ian Benning, Shares4Schools coordinator, said: "Feedback from schools suggests that it is the 'real' money element which separates Shares4Schools from fantasy-based competitions. Teachers have found students spend more time researching their investments and think twice before committing to a share when real money is involved. Plus, participating in the competition also helps to develop team working and decision making skills."

Registrations for the 2009/10 competition are now being accepted via the website www.shares4schools.org until 25 September. Schools interested in one of the many £750 sponsorships on offer are encouraged to register early to avoid disappointment.

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About Shares4Schools:

Shares4Schools is a competition organised by The Share Centre, a leading retail stockbroker. Established in 2003 and endorsed by pfeg, this unique competition brings Economics and Business Studies to life as students invest real money in the stock market. The competition is open to schools throughout the UK, with teams of students competing in regional and national leagues.

How does it work?

Each team must raise an investment pot of £1,500 to invest in the stock market, with the aim of achieving the highest fund value over the period from October to June. Schools are encouraged to raise the initial investment pot through sponsorship from local businesses, funding from the Enterprise Initiative Fund and their PTA.

In addition to promoting and administering the competition, The Share Centre offers a limited number of sponsorships of £750 which schools can apply for when registering their interest in the competition.

All participating schools retain the proceeds of their investment fund to use at their discretion, and the team with the highest value fund at the end of the competition will be recognised at a special ceremony in London.

Shares4Schools can be used as part of broad lesson plans or with just a smaller group. It is designed to be self-sufficient, enabling teachers to give as much or as little direction as they feel appropriate. For regulatory reasons, the dealing account is in the name of two authorised representatives of the school, one of whom will carry out the investment decisions: these can be teachers, parents or any other nominated adult. So whilst the competition delivers a broad range of learning experiences, it is not a drain on valuable teaching time.

About trading:

The Shares4Schools trading account is based on The Share Centre's successful Investment Club service.

Funds are invested in the school's name through an online dealing account provided by The Share Centre. The value and make-up of the investment portfolio is visible 24/7 via the Shares4Schools website, using 15 minute delayed prices from the London Stock Exchange. The portfolio value goes to make up the league table, so changes in the values of investments are

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quickly reflected in the team's league position. To reflect realism, dealing costs are payable as normal, although The Share Centre will, at the end of the competition, donate to the school the total of its dealing charges.

About The Share Centre:

The Share Centre Ltd was formed in 1991 to provide low-cost share services for private investors. The Share Centre's range of services includes buying and selling shares (by Internet, telephone and post), provision of regular valuations, Investment Advice and Individual Saving Accounts. For more details contact 0800 800 008, or visit www.share.com