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Students learn the lessons about dangerous toys

Students from seven Kent schools have won a place at this year's national Playsafe competition, run in conjunction with the British Toy and Hobby Association, which raises awareness of the importance of safe toys for children.

All schools in the county were invited to design toys which comply with safety standards and they were encouraged to think about issues such as the target age group, safety features and the materials their creations would be made from, together with the correct safety warnings.

Officers from Kent County Council's Trading Standards Service, which monitors the sale of dangerous toys, selected the finalists who will now compete with schools across the country for the national prize at the Trading Standards Institute conference in Brighton on 1 July. Winners in each age category receive book tokens and the overall winner secures an additional £1000 worth of IT equipment for their school.

The Kent schools whose entries will be judged at the national conference are:

- Gateway Primary School, **Dartford** (for the second year running)
- Painters Ash Primary School, **Northfleet**
- New Ash Green CP School, **Longfield**
- Highsted Grammar School, **Sittingbourne**
- St John's CE Primary School, **Maidstone**
- Loose Junior School, **Maidstone**
- Allington Primary School, **Maidstone** (for the second year running)

Kent Trading Standards' work includes cracking down on those who sell counterfeit and often dangerous toys and officers work undercover to monitor boot sales, markets and retailers to seize fake goods and take the traders to court.

Officers recently seized hundreds of dangerous items including toy cars, fake Spiderman helicopters, children's bags and fake Dora the Explorer and Winnie the Pooh toys, some of which were found to contain excessively high levels of lead and chromium.

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KCC prospective Cabinet Member for Communities Mike Hill said:

“It is important for young people and their families to know what to look for when buying toys and games. This competition is a fun way for them to understand and learn about keeping themselves and each other safe.”

Tips from Kent Trading Standards on buying toys are:

- Only buy from reputable shops
- Look for the CE and Lion marks and any safety warnings
- Check the age range the toy is suitable for and look out for the age symbol on the packaging
- Does the toy have small parts which could be swallowed?
- What is the toy made of? Are there any sharp edges, spikes or moving parts which could trap little fingers?
- Pull on parts of the toy to check whether they come off
- Are there strings or cords?

Notes to Editors:

- The Playsafe challenge, organised by the Trading Standards Institute with the British Toy and Hobby Association is run for two age groups, from 6 to 17 years old to design a toy that is suitable for children aged three to seven. As well as putting their ideas on paper, they have to provide detailed notes that explain how the toy is to be used, the safety features, the play and child development benefits, whether the toy is for indoor or outdoor use and if it is suitable for children with special needs.
- Counterfeit toys have often not gone through the same rigorous tests as genuine goods. They are often copies of real brands with slight differences to the packaging or name but are normally very poor quality, posing a danger to children.

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