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Wych Elm,
Fishery Road
Maidenhead SL6 1UP
01628 634081
barriemair1@gmail.com

Manor green School
Elizabeth Hawkws Way
Maidenhead
Berkshire
SL6 3EQ

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Can you think of a product which would help your pupils but, which is not available yet?

To the Head Teacher/Charity Leader and all teaching and therapy Staff

Before this letter, you may not have heard of the Wooden Spoon, and maybe have limited knowledge of Imperial College – so please bear with me.

The Wooden Spoon is the Children's Charity of British Rugby which has, for the past 34 years, raised monies to provide funds for capital projects to improve the lives of disadvantaged children all over the UK.

We, the Chilterns Region of Wooden Spoon, believe there is scope to improve on the products currently available, through using modern leading-edge technology. In conjunction with Imperial College (London) we are inviting you to take part in a competition to prove this is possible. This competition has the aim of demonstrating that, by inviting children's service providers to specify aspirational products, we can together radically improve the outcome for a sub-set of such children.

This letter is being sent to invite you, your staff, and possibly the parents of your children, to enter a competition which we are running for all schools and special needs centres for children, in our Chilterns region (Berkshire, South Bucks and South-East Oxon).

Our partner in this competition is the world-renowned Imperial College (rated the third best University in the UK, and 8th in the world). The University is, for the purposes of this project, academically focussed in the key areas of Science, Technology and Medicine.

Entries to the competition will close on the 30th October 2017. The best entry, as judged by a panel of entrepreneurial and special needs experts, will receive two I-pads for their school/institution. The winning idea will then be developed by a team of students at Imperial College, over the summer of 2018, who will be tasked to produce to a full working prototype, which the winning school (or centre) will then be invited to trial.

The constraints we would place on entries are of a technical and financial nature only:

1. The device (or software) would have to rely on known technologies

2. It would have to be capable of being designed and built over a 10-week period by a team of up to 6 students, with research staff help. The panel of judges will assess this, but you can discuss your thoughts with us before completing your entry, if you are unsure as to the likely work involved, via the e-mail address below.
3. The project should address the needs of a large group of children with special needs, as opposed to a the needs of a specific individual or small subgroup.
4. The target market price for the end-product should to be less than £10,000, meaning that materials and assembly costs should be no more the 50% of this figure.

Why are we doing this?

Over the last 34 years, the Wooden Spoon nationally have made grants for circa 700 projects throughout the including special needs schools. These grants responded to requests for financial assistance to fund building work, or to buy equipment chosen from suppliers catalogues. The equipment purchases represent what was available at the time, and have often been triggered by what is used in other similar schools. In the view of many teachers and carers, there is little is little hard evidence to show that initiatives significantly alter the lifetime outcomes for the special needs children involved.

Technology has recently moved on rapidly, such that things which could not previously be considered, are now possible.

Imperial College, is one of the world's leading engineering, science and medical institutions, which did much practical work to improve the performance of British Paralympians at the RIO games. However, the devices developed were matched to the needs of individuals, or small groups of athletes, and would be of little practical use to children.

The aim of this Wooden Spoon funded initiative is to find a technical solution to a problem for a large group of special needs children, not currently provided by any product available on the market today.

What do we want you to do now?

Please!

1. **Circulate this e-message to all employees and volunteers in your organisation, and to share it with parents of children attending your school.**
2. **Ask them to submit ideas either directly to us, or via the school, which identify the need, and the benefit to be achieved from a device or computer program, with a short explanation of the improvement in quality of life hoped for.**

The winning entry will receive two I-pads for use by their school or charity.

Responses should be no more than 2000 words, and should be sent by email to:

chilterns@woodenspoon.org.uk

Yours sincerely



Dr Barrie Mair (Chairman of the Chilterns Region of Wooden Spoon)