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Press Release

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## **THRASS Synthetic Phonics Programme Meets with Immediate Success in Nigeria**

Nigeria is the latest country to introduce the widely acclaimed THRASS synthetic phonics programme into schools and, as elsewhere, it has once again met with immediate success.

The THRASS (Teaching Handwriting Reading And Spelling Skills) synthetic phonics programme helps learners to develop sound literacy skills from an early age by teaching them about the 44 phonemes (speech sounds) of spoken English and the 120 graphemes (spelling choices) of written English. It has been heralded as a revolutionary approach to teaching English that provides learners not just with handwriting, reading and spelling skills but also with valuable life skills training. It is being used in thousands of schools across Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, the Caribbean and the USA, and wherever it is used, it surpasses all expectations. Using THRASS in a balanced language curriculum can more than double the normal rate of progress for learning reading and spelling for primary and secondary school children, and also for dyslexics and those for whom English is not their first language.

The Nigerian Government has recently approved the introduction of THRASS and from January to July 2009, the programme is being introduced to a number of city and rural schools in Oyo State, where THRASS UK has agreed to fund a six-month pilot literacy project. The seven schools selected for the pilot project are from regions located throughout Oyo State, including Saki, Iseyin, Oko, Oyo, Eruwa and, the state capital, Ibadan. The project, which has been approved by the Ministry of Education and the State Universal Basic Education Board, will be supervised by Dr Nkechi Christopher and other lecturers from the University of Ibadan and Ladoke University of Technology.

Alan Davies, British Educational Psychologist and Executive Director of THRASS UK, who has pioneered the development of the THRASS programme, has just

returned from a highly successful visit to Nigeria to set up the pilot project. During the visit he had meetings with the Commissioner for Education, visited schools and held the first THRASS training courses for the supervisors, head teachers and Primary One teachers at the University of Ibadan. Comments received from those who attended the training show just how impressed they were with THRASS: "Educative and interesting! The missing link in the teaching and learning of English in Nigeria." "If used in Nigeria, students learning English would find it easy; and both written and spoken English in the country would greatly improve." "I urge the State Government to support the organisers and adopt THRASS for future generations in the education sector."

But those attending the training courses weren't the only ones to be impressed. As Dr Christopher explained: "You cannot learn if you cannot read, and you cannot express yourself if you cannot write. If, through the THRASS programme, we can elevate education by developing people's literacy skills and developing their interest in reading and writing, then the sky's the limit. And we're not just talking about teaching English because we are also extending the THRASS programme to our own language, through the new THRASS Calendar Chart in Yoruba."

Alan Davies will be returning to Nigeria in May to train schools and hold a follow-up workshop, and again in July to observe progress and to discuss the project with Dr Christopher and teachers. The project will throughout be overseen by supervisors who will visit schools to monitor the progress being made, report back on any problems and administer reading and spelling pre-tests.

It is an indication of the significance of THRASS that in South Africa it is being sponsored by Absa Bank, a member of the Barclays Group, through the THRASS Absa TalkTogether Project and the second TalkTogether Conference was last month held in Johannesburg. In addition, the THRASS Accredited Certificate is already a compulsory module for Foundation Phase student teachers at six South African universities and to date, over 5,000 teachers and student teachers in South Africa have earned the THRASS Accredited Certificate. To date, over 1,000 student teachers have been funded by Absa Bank to attend the accredited course.

Already the Nigerian Government has expressed a wish to expand the number of schools and teachers taking part in the pilot project and THRASS UK would be interested to hear from potential sponsors of a larger initiative. That larger initiative would include the promotion of the latest Version 6.0 of the THRASS

Phoneme Machine, a groundbreaking computer programme that uses moving human lips to demonstrate the pronunciation of the sounds in hundreds of frequently used English words and is particularly helpful for teaching children starting to read, children finding reading difficult and those for who English is not their first language.

Phoneme Machine Version 6.0 includes a Cued Speech option that will enable deaf children to be taught using synthetic phonics and is expected to transform the way deaf children are taught to read. This is of particular significance for Africa, where deafness is a major problem and, given the appropriate sponsorship, the Phoneme Machine now has the potential to make an enormous difference there.

### **Notes to Editors**

The THRASS extensive picture-based training website for schools and parents is at [www.thrass.co.uk/teaching.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/teaching.htm)

For a video of State coverage of teachers attending the first training course (and interviews with the Commissioner for Education, Oyo State, the Chairman, State Universal Basic Education Board, and Dr Nkechi Christopher, University of Ibadan) and a video entitled THRASS in Nigeria, visit [www.thrass.co.uk/nigeria\\_videostream.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/nigeria_videostream.htm).

The teaching staff at Holy Rosary School in Limpopo, South Africa, are convinced that THRASS is the best thing that has happened to English, spelling and phonics. The children particularly love the THRASS SING-A-LONG songs and in the video on [www.thrass.co.uk/holyrosary\\_limpopo.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/holyrosary_limpopo.htm) we see children of all ages enthusiastically performing a selection of the songs.

For a short video of the Phoneme Machine Version 6.0 with Cued Speech option and other key THRASS interactive resources, visit [www.thrass.co.uk/bs.htm](http://www.thrass.co.uk/bs.htm)

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