



Local schools to go on trial

On Saturday 10th March, five local schools will compete in the Dorset heat of the annual Magistrates' Courts Mock Trial Competition.

The competition is taking place at Poole Magistrates' Courts and will have teams competing from Bournemouth School for Girls, Kings High School, Highcliffe School, Ringwood School and Beaminster School.

During the competition the school pupils, aged 12-14 years-old, will compete in teams of 13 adopting the roles of lawyers, witnesses, magistrates, court staff and defendants to act out the drama of a carefully constructed criminal case in a real courtroom.

District Judge Roger House will open this year's competition, which will see over 60 pupils taking part. Magistrates and court staff will be judging the performance of the teams as they act out trials lasting up to an hour each. There are also separate Legal Reporter and Court Artist competitions on the day.

Graham Cole J.P, a local magistrate and organiser of the Dorset heat, said: "This is a unique opportunity for young people to learn about the legal system and find out how magistrates take all aspects of a case into account when coming to a final decision.



that their local courts play in the community.

"By taking on the role of lawyers, court staff, witnesses and defendants young people can experience exactly what it is like to work within the court system, and it is a very practical, exciting and fun way of allowing them to experience a live courtroom environment."



The winning team will go on to compete in the Regional Final, taking place in Southampton Magistrates' Courts on Saturday 19th May. The National Final takes place in Nottingham Magistrates' Courts this year on Saturday 23rd June.

The competition is an annual event aimed at giving young people an understanding of their criminal justice system, the legal and human rights that underpin our society and the moral and social issues that often have to be taken into account when defendants appear in court.

"Over 95% of criminal cases, more than one million every year, are dealt with by magistrates, yet very few people know about the role