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Schools can enter the space race

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It cost Nasa approximately \$1.7bn to build the Space Shuttle Endeavour.

Now schools in Norfolk are being challenged to build their own spacecraft and launch it into space on a budget of just £500.

The highly unusual task has been set by Norfolk-based charity Yellobric.

It will see Norfolk schools compete against schools in South Africa and Ethiopia and aims to ignite passion for maths, physics and geography.

Gavin Paterson, co-founder of Yellobric, based in Smallburgh, near Stalham, explained that The School Space Race will see pupils design a spacecraft and then launch it using a weather balloon.

He said: "The aim is to see which school can successfully launch their craft the furthest into space.

"Participating schools will research space travel history and then look at different ways they can get their craft into space on their budget.

"It will involve using maths and physics to work out how big a balloon they will need, how much helium is required to burst the balloon at the correct altitude, deciding how the craft will cope with the low temperatures and pressures near the edge of space, as well as the different

wind directions and speeds at different heights."

The first pilot link between a London school and one in South Africa has already taken place.

The project can be conducted on a budget of £400 to £500 to acquire the key components of a weather balloon, GPS tracker, digital camera and

altimeter with pupils researching the best method to build the craft and launch it.

Mr Paterson said: "If schools in Norfolk can fund the £400 to £500, we will fund a partner school in Africa."

The competition will run over 12 months.

■ Pupils from a school in South Africa inflating the weather balloon.

Picture:
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■ For more information, schools can call Mr Paterson on 01692 536226, email gavin.paterson@yellobric.com or visit www.yellobric.com/schoolspacerace/

■ Are you running a school space project? E mail adam.lazzari@archant.co.uk