

FLYING HIGH

A regional event with the RAF

Wednesday 1st July 2015 at RAF Cranwell

This is a revised version of our Flying High event, which is now in its second year at RAF Cranwell. This challenge sets out to enhance valuable employability skills such as communication, teamwork and commitment through the medium of foreign languages and team tasks. The RAF is all about flying, so we wanted to use that as a theme for the day. It was an opportunity for students to work with experienced RAF officers as well as international business people and expand their knowledge of how languages can improve their career opportunities.

We were delighted to have 11 teams of Year 9 and 10 students in total. They came from Charles Read Academy in Corby Glen, St. George's Academy in Sleaford, Toot Hill School in Bingham, Joseph Whitaker School in Mansfield, Walton Girls' School in Grantham, Oundle School and Kesteven & Sleaford Girls High School. 6 teams were working in French, 4 in German and 1 in Spanish, reversing a recent trend for a larger number of Spanish teams.

The event took place in the fabulous Daedalus Mess at Cranwell, a perfect venue for the event, except that we had chosen the hottest day of the year, so even the airy Mess struggled to keep us cool! We started with an icebreaker deciphering words in the Russian alphabet, and then went into a keynote talk from Tim Smith and Sam Neill, both RAF linguists who talked about their careers, and typical days out on deployment when you are using your languages to the full. This was followed by an interactive language taster in Pashtu, led by Sam and Jo Neill, who are recently back from a tour of duty in Afghanistan, where their Pashtu knowledge was tested to the full.



The challenge and activities were built into a storyline. The principle idea was that each team was working with European counterparts to develop a new design of parachute to be able to drop safely behind enemy lines. Using real parachute silk and cord from RAF parachutes, the teams had to construct a prototype that would descend gently enough to land an egg without cracking. They had to order all their materials in their target language from their European suppliers.

Within this challenge was a code breaker game, which simulated sending messages to your team having landed in enemy territory at night. Using blindfolds to simulate restricted night time vision, half the team had to guide the blindfolded members to hang washing on a line in a correct sequence with the right colour pegs to crack a code. Furthermore, the teams had to think about being shot down with limited supplies in the desert, and were asked to put together 10 priority items for a desert survival kit. Again, their list and reasoning had to be in the target language. Finally, the teams were asked to put together a presentation on their parachute to present to the



commanding officers of their chosen country. Whilst the presentations were going on, the other teams were challenged by a number of fun RAF STEM quick activities and by a quiz on the Arab world.

The day wouldn't have been complete of course without being able to test their specially designed parachutes. For this we made our way over to the Sports Ground, where they were dropped from a pavilion balcony of 10 metres. In 2014, we tested these out from a crane drop of 15 metres, but the wind on that day led all the parachutes to get in such a tangle, that we decided we needed a better solution! Whilst not quite so high, the pavilion balcony did the job. All but two of the teams managed to keep their egg safe, and we apologise to our BLC Laurence Dufour, who gamely put herself forward for investigating the damage!



For the teachers, there was an added bonus in being able to go to an exhibition on careers in the main college building, and some students also benefited from the exhibition at the end.

The eventual winners were the French team from Joseph Whitaker School who will be treated to another great day at RAF Cranwell, getting to do some activities not normally open to schools. Runners-up were the German team from Kesteven & Sleaford Girls' High School.



The student comments on the day included:

"It was really fun and useful!"

"All staff were enthusiastic and helpful."

"I enjoyed the insight into Pashtu and how languages can be used in the RAF."

"The presentation was useful because you have to work in a team to make it good."

"Thank you for a great day☺"

"The Pashtu taster taught me how hard some languages can be."



Teacher comments included:

"Excellent day all round."

"Would recommend your days to other schools in a heartbeat!"

"The day was exceptionally well organised."

"The girls have had a fabulous day. Thank you so much."

"Great event, great venue, students really gained from it."

7 teachers commented on how their students benefited from the team work.

We would like to thank the following Business Language Champions for supporting this event:

- Tim Smith from the RAF
- Sam Neill from the RAF
- Jo Neill from the RAF
- Brigitte Peach from Languages for Life
- Helen Fagan – Postgraduate student
- Laurence Dufour – IOSH
- Linda Retberg
- Gerry Blacoe

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Contacts

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