

INTO THE ARAB WORLD

A regional event with the RAF

Friday 8th July 2016 at RAF Waddington

Every year we aim to run one event promoting the career possibilities of learning a more exotic language, not often taught in UK schools. This year we decided to combine this with our annual outing to the RAF and set up a new event based around Arabic. Arabic is an important RAF language on account of the current difficulties in the Middle East. This challenge set out to enhance valuable employability skills such as communication, teamwork and commitment through the medium of Arabic and team tasks linked to RAF-type activities. 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 had 8 teams of Year 9 and 10 students in total. They came from St. George's Academy, Carre's Grammar School and Kesteven and Sleaford High School Selective Academy (all three from Sleaford), Queen Elizabeth's Academy in Gainsborough, Priory Witham Academy and Branston Community College, both from Lincoln, and the City of Norwich School.

The event took place in the Officers' Mess at Waddington, a perfect venue for the event. We started with an icebreaker matching countries in the Middle East with their capital cities. We then went into a keynote talk from Holly Stead and Rebecca Gould, 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 Arabic, led by Holly, Rebecca and other RAF linguists. There was no opportunity for the students to relax however, as the language taster contained vital Arabic for their challenge to come.



The challenge and activities were built into a storyline. The principle idea was that the students were RAF Intelligence recruits, working with the peace-keeping forces of the United Nations and the Iraqi people to bring peace to the region. From code-breaking to plotting camps on a map from Arabic co-ordinates, to sending Arabic code messages, and putting together a survival kit, each team worked towards a daring rescue mission behind enemy lines, which required learning as much as possible about local culture and customs.

Finally, the teams were asked to put together a presentation on their work to present to their commanding officers. The presentations formed part of a carousel of activities to deepen the students' understanding of the Arab world, which included food tasting and making, learning to write the Arabic script, an interactive talk on business customs and an opportunity to ask questions about careers in the RAF.

The eventual winners were joint team from Carre's Grammar School and KSHSSA who will be treated to another great day at RAF Wittering, getting to do some activities not normally open to schools. Runners-up were the team from Queen Elizabeth's High School in Gainsborough.



The student comments on what they found most useful or enjoyable included:

'Learning how to talk Arabic because learning a new language is always helpful'

'Learning how to write in Arabic and meeting other schools'

'Learning about the culture and the 'do's and the 'don'ts'

'Learning how Arabic is used in the RAF'

'Speaking to the RAF members about how languages are useful'

'Expanding my language horizons.'

General student comments included:

'I really enjoyed it, thank you'

'Really fun and interesting'

'Had a great day 😊'

'Really brilliant day, thank you'

'I thought the talk with Tamzin was extremely helpful as it informed me of future career options.'

Teacher comments included:

'Thank you again for such a lovely well-organised event! You are all so great 😊'

'Great day – really interesting subject/language!'

'Venue was ideal – good room size and facilities.'

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

- Tim Smith from the RAF
- Holly Stead from the RAF
- Rebecca Gould from the RAF
- Other linguists from the RAF
- Louise Stock - UKTI
- Andrew Swift
- Margaret Swift
- Anna Hutton



We would particularly like to thank Squadron Leader Tamzin Keenlyside at RAF Wittering for all her help in arranging the day and of course RAF Waddington for offering their facilities, including the officers at RAF Waddington Sqn Ldr Dave McRitchie, Flt Sgt Dave Franklin and Flt Lt. Tiffany Morris who made it possible.

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