

## مسابقة التحدث للغة العربية

### Arabic Speaking Competition 2022

#### Judges' report

This year's competition had 194 entries from across the UK, up from 48 last year. The judges selected 25 winners from 16 schools across the 4 nations of the UK. There are 13 boys and 12 girls among the winners; they are aged between 10 and 19.

Contestants came from a wide range of backgrounds and have learned Arabic in a variety of different ways. Some are native speakers of Arabic who have learned fusha in schools in their home countries, others are born and brought up in UK and use Arabic at home, often speaking a dialect of the language fluently but with limited formal learning of fusha. Some have learned Arabic from a young age for religious reasons, although they do not speak it as a home language, and yet others still have come to the language with no prior knowledge whatsoever and are at the very beginning of their Arabic journey.

The judging panel was profoundly impressed by the overall standard of the entries, and by the level of Arabic that the contestants were able to produce. It was clear that a great deal of effort has gone into the learning of Arabic whether that be at school with teachers of Arabic, or at home with support from family. We were particularly struck by a number of things:

- those contestants who are able to hold sustained conversations in fusha with few mistakes and high degree of linguistic sophistication despite not learning the language in their mainstream school. It is a delight to see these young people keeping their mother tongue so vibrantly alive
- those contestants who have no prior knowledge of the language and have been learning for a very short time but who had the courage and confidence to share what they have learned
- and those contestants who with no Arabic heritage or experience have nevertheless reached a high degree of fluency in the language and are able to express their thoughts and feelings in the language

All the winners brought a wealth of commitment, passion, and enthusiasm to their performances. They were selected on the basis of their presentations being delivered in natural and unscripted language combined with an ability to respond spontaneously to the panel's questions. We were not looking for complete absence of mistakes but rather the ability to communicate meaningfully and use the language in a free and extemporaneous fashion.

The judges also wish to share a number of tips and recommendations for those who are considering entering next years competition:

Contestants should be encouraged to speak naturally, and spontaneously. It was clear to us in some cases that contestants were reading from a prepared script, or had simply memorised the presentation in advance. In some cases, the level of language being read out was significantly better than the contestant's ability to answer questions or use the language in a freer context. This may mean that the contestant's ability in reading is far greater than their ability to communicate in the language orally, or that they have been assisted in the preparation of their script.

The judges recommend that contestants should be encouraged to speak spontaneously. They should be given the opportunity to practice their spoken presentation and rehearse in advance either with teachers or peers, the question and answer part, so that they can practice listening and speaking.

There were occasions when the judges could see quite clearly the contestant looking away from the screen to their teacher for guidance and support. We recommend that teachers refrain from prompting the candidate.

In some cases it seemed that the contestants did not know what the format of the contest would be and we also suggest that the competition guidelines should be shared with contestants in advance.

The judging panel would like to express its deepest gratitude to all the candidates who took part in the 2022 Arabic Speaking Competition. It has been an absolute pleasure and an honour to meet and converse in Arabic with so many young people from around the country and we look forward to further competitions in the future.