

Kingsford triumphant in National Mandarin Competition



For the second time in four years, students from Kingsford Community School have been crowned champions at the HSBC sponsored UK National Mandarin Chinese Speaking Competition. The finals were held at the British Museum on 26th February.

The victory was particularly fitting, coming only a week after the Schools Minister, Jim Knight MP, had expressed his intention to promote the teaching of Mandarin in state schools by expanding the network of Confucius Classrooms within the UK.

In 2001, Kingsford, a mixed comprehensive school in the heart of East London for pupils between the ages of 11 to 16, became the first school in the UK to place Mandarin on its curriculum. Since that moment, it has made remarkable strides towards becoming a major centre for the promotion of Chinese learning. In 2007, the school became the first SSAT Confucius Classroom for London and the South-East. Subsequently, the



school has worked closely with the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust, the Chinese Embassy and Hanban (National Office for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language) to develop its own Chinese learning programme, whilst simultaneously promoting China's language and culture to other schools in the region, with the aid of its Hanban funded Mandarin staff.

A team of six pupils, from years 7, 8 and 11 have

worked for week to put on a drama performance. The story, titled 'One Family', and written by year 11 pupil Obioma Imachukwu, was loosely based on the story of Joseph from the Bible. One of the judges commented on how the moving nature of the story had swayed the decision.

Not only did the pupils present the dialogue in Mandarin, but they also sang, danced and presented gripping performances of ancient Chinese arts 'tai chi' and kung fu. The team was comprised of Kajal Ralh (year 7); Noshin Hussain, Johura Hasna, Osman Abdul-Moomin (year 8); Obioma Imachukwu, Issah Abdul-Moomin (year 11).

The language ability and the art forms that the children presented all reflect the wide range of Mandarin-related activities that are available to the pupils at the Language College and Confucius Classroom. This wholesale approach to learning demonstrates the commitment of Kingsford Community School to not only educating its students in the Chinese language, but crucially enabling them to experience and appreciate China's rich and diverse culture as a whole, thereby making them more internationally conscious – a major aim of the school since it was accredited with the 2007 International School Award, a scheme funded by the DCFS and managed by the British Council.

The competition is supported by the HSBC Global Education Programme and organised by the British Council to support and promote the teaching of Chinese as a modern foreign language in UK schools. The competition is open to all secondary and sixth form students in years 7 - 13 who are non-native speakers of Chinese.

Kingsford's Head Teacher, Joan Deslandes, was delighted with this most recent success. "The school is doing something very significant in changing stereotypes about China, and spreading some enlightenment where it is best placed - in the hearts and minds of young people", she said.