

Nihongo Cup 2007



Finalists gather with sponsors and organisers at Nihongo Cup 2007

This year the Nihongo Cup (Japanese Speech Contest for Secondary Schools) received a record 182 entries from 29 schools throughout the UK. 18 finalists gathered at the Embassy of Japan on Saturday the 23rd June to give their speeches to an audience of fellow pupils, teachers, parents and invited guests from the education and Japan-related fields. Nihongo Cup 2007 was organised by the Embassy of Japan in London, the Japanese Language Committee (JLC) of the Association for Language Learning and the Japan Foundation London.

In the Key Stage 3 category, 1st place was awarded to Talia Goldman from Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls. Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 students were required to talk about 'My school', and Talia chose to talk about her ideal school. Students wear fancy dress instead of school uniform, and classrooms are like sets; snow scenes, dark scenes (Please see below for each of the winner's speech summary). On hearing that she had won first place, Talia said that she wanted to either "dance or cry!" Talia loves learning Japanese because it is fun, and she believes that she would never have started to find out so much about Japan had she not chosen to study the language.

Holly Harrison from Tavistock College was awarded 2nd prize, and Barney Main from Dame Alice Owen's School took 3rd prize.

Rebecca Rawlinson from Aldercar Community Language College was this year's winner of the Key Stage 4 category. Rebecca talked about her experience of Japanese school life, and she hopes to have the opportunity to return to Japan one day. Second prize was awarded to Samuel Buckland from Temple Moor School, and 3rd prize was awarded to Laura Wilson from St Helen's School.

The Key Stage 5 category, organised in collaboration with the Japanese Speech Awards (JSA) was won by Tom Collins from Wycliffe College. Josh Champion from South Wolds School received second prize and third prize went to Tom's brother, Oliver Collins from Pate's Grammar School. Tom is delighted to have won the opportunity to participate in the JSA Culture Programme in Japan. He said he was absolutely stunned to take first prize, and that it had been a wonderful end to his school career. Tom initially saw Japanese as a way to avoid French but he soon started to look forward to Japanese lessons. Tom plans to spend next year in Japan teaching English, before returning to read Oriental Studies at either Oxford or SOAS.

All first prize winners received engraved trophies and gold medals as well as notebook computers donated by Toshiba. Those in second place won silver medals and digital cameras donated by Ricoh UK Ltd. Third prize winners received electronic dictionaries courtesy of JP- Books, who also donated goody bags to all Key Stage 5 finalists.

Speech Summaries

Key Stage 3 Winner

Talia Golman – Haberdashers' Aske's School for Girls



Talia's school is a dream come true for those who like drama: lessons are fun, and the school is surrounded by bubbles, which carry the pupils from room to room. There is no uniform, and everyone is in costume – carnival on Mondays, scary on Tuesdays, fairytale on Wednesdays, pirates on Thursdays, and Oriental on Fridays. Classrooms are like sets: snow scenes, dark scenes, Notting Hill Carnival, China town....Pupils perform their drama in each classroom. Another unusual aspect of this school is that the teachers have to pass kindness and respect tests set by the students.

Key Stage 4 Winner

Rebecca Rawlinson, Aldercar Community Language College



Rebecca tells us about being a pupil at Aldercar Language College. It is a school full of lively pupils and kind teachers – with a few strict ones! She tells us why she thinks learning foreign languages is important and of her own experiences of visiting Japan and doing a homestay with a Japanese family. She loved Japanese school life – even the cleaning – and hopes to have the opportunity to go back to Japan one day.

Key Stage 5 Winner

Tom Collins, Wycliffe College

Japan through Western Eyes



Tom started studying the Japanese language because he was interested in the unique culture of Japan. Taking kendo as an example, Tom discovered that, to the Japanese, learning kendo is also to learn about their own identity as Japanese people. Why then do foreigners take up kendo? Tom thinks that it is to break down, and enter into, the 'other' that can be seen as mysterious and strange. Tom concludes that understanding another culture is hard, as is learning another language, but he is determined to succeed in mastering Japanese and fully appreciating the culture.

To see the full final programme including the speech summaries of all 18 finalists, please go to the following link: http://www.jpf.org.uk/language/download/Final_programme.pdf