

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arabic is recognised as an increasingly important language globally. However, Arabic is only taught in an estimated 5% of UK secondary schools, with provision largely within Islamic faith secondary or supplementary schools.

The British Council and QFI commissioned this research to help build a better picture of Arabic teaching provision and explore the key drivers and barriers that exist to this. The aim of this research is to identify what support may be needed to encourage further uptake.

Research insights were gained through:

- A review of existing literature.
- Interviews with teachers in Arabic-teaching and non-Arabic-teaching schools, learners of Arabic and their parents and key opinion leaders.
- Creation of a database of schools known to teach Arabic in the UK.

## FINDINGS

Schools can see a real value in being able to offer Arabic to their students. It is seen as a great way to:

- Promote multiculturalism and pride in student identity.
- Challenge and overcome negative perceptions of Arabic and Arab culture.
- Improve students' career prospects.
- Cater to their student body's needs and existing skills.

However, there are many challenges that are faced in being able to realise this goal of delivering Arabic teaching as part of the curriculum.

- Lack of teachers.
- Timetable pressures.
- Low-level awareness of resources.
- Funding challenges.
- Students' perceived lack of relevance.
- Qualification availability.
- Perceived difficulty of Arabic.

***It would be another thing that would make us even more unique as a state school that offers a huge range of languages.***

***We had about 9 students across various years who are very interested in learning Arabic, but it came down to a combination of budget and being able to recruit an appropriate person to teach it.***

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The British Council and QFI already deliver support in many key challenging areas. There is more to be done in terms of raising awareness of this existing offer, as well as fine-tuning this support.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This report identifies the following 6 key areas for the British Council and QFI's future offer to focus on:

### RAISE AWARENESS OF THE BRITISH COUNCIL AND QFI

- Especially the resource bank and funding availability.
- Reach out to schools on the Arabic-teaching database, and those in areas known to have large Arabic-speaking communities, outlining the key areas of support that can be offered and showing how other schools have been supported.
- Further research may be needed to explore the best channels for this communication.

### RESOURCES

- Raise awareness of the existing teaching materials available on the QFI website.
- Further research may be useful to explore teachers' experiences with the platform and to understand how this can support ongoing resourcing needs.
- Partner with publishers or help to facilitate development of resources that are either exam board endorsed or aligned to GCSE content.

### TRAIN AND RETAIN TEACHERS

- Continue to offer grants to teachers for CPD.
- Promote the existence of the Arabic Teacher Councils to Arabic-teaching schools to allow more teachers to share best practice. Perhaps look to set up more of these in other regions and/or create online networks for teachers outside of these locations.
- Work with universities to encourage and increase Arabic-teacher training. Perhaps create partnerships between universities and schools in areas with a high-level community need. These schools are likely to be more open to taking on a newly qualified Arabic teacher.
- Continue to offer long-term funding for schools to hire a teacher and support them in their initial years at the school. This will be important to remove the initial financial burden and allow Arabic to become more embedded in the school.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## RECOMMENDATIONS CONTINUED

### QUALIFICATIONS

- Explore the possibility of creating new certification prior to the GCSE level to offer smaller milestones for learners.
- Continue to work with Education Scotland and SCILT to increase teaching of Arabic as an L3 language, building on the success of sessions run in lockdown.
- Explore the possibility of introducing Arabic through a Modern Languages for Life and Work qualification.

### CASE STUDIES FOR SCHOOLS

- Create a variety of case studies of schools that have successfully introduced Arabic teaching to help others to see a clearer pathway. These should detail how schools overcame any barriers, the benefits they have seen among students and successes for the school.
- Explore the option of creating an ambassador school programme, perhaps through the Teacher Councils network, to allow schools that are considering introducing the language to speak to another school for advice and guidance.

### ENGAGING STUDENTS

- Produce communication pieces to inform students of the benefits of studying Arabic, in terms of both cultural and employment benefits.
- Produce wider information pieces on the Arabic-speaking world and Arab culture, including messaging to combat Islamophobia.
- Continue to offer workshops/ activity days for schools in which Arabic culture is explored and students are given an introduction to the Arabic language.
- Continue to deliver school taster sessions, particularly in primary schools, to help spark an early interest in the language – replicating the successes of recent workshops run with SCILT.
- Potentially increase the online offer of workshops to allow for more drop-in, lower-cost sessions.
- Expand the Arabic Speaking Competition, and explore other competitions and cultural events that the British Council and QFI could coordinate.
- Continue to explore the work from the Confucius Institute in relation to promoting Mandarin and mirror the successes for Arabic promotion.