



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **Polish 2685** *Specification*

**PLSH1      Reading and Writing**

# **Report on the Examination**

*2009 examination - June series*

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

## General Comments

As last year there was a mixture of candidates. However, there were a large number of candidates with excellent Polish who did not prepare for the exam, thinking that their fluent knowledge of Polish would suffice. This trend could be observed last year but this year, with a higher number of candidates, it was even more noticeable.

There were many very untidy, badly written and sometimes barely legible scripts which made scrutiny difficult.

It is of paramount importance that centres make sure that the candidates they have entered read the specification and they know what the exam requirements are. The best thing is for the candidates to have some sort of tuition; if the school can not offer this there are many Polish Saturday schools throughout the country running classes preparing students for the A Level exams.

Candidates should be reminded to read the instructions carefully and to study past papers for practice: in this way, they will know what is expected of them and will fully understand what answering question entails.

## Comprehension

The new PLSH 1 paper contains an additional component in the comprehension section (Question 1 (b)), consisting of five true/false/don't know questions based on the examination text. The maximum marks the candidate can obtain on comprehension is 45. To accommodate the change in the comprehension section the translation is now marked out of ten rather than fifteen as before though in every other respect the new specification and the legacy paper are the same. Some candidates failed to comply fully with the instructions given in the rubric, which called for students to mark the boxes with either a letter P, F or N. Teachers and prospective candidates should note that those who mark the boxes with a cross, tick or any other symbol other than those given in the instructions run the risk of forfeiting valuable marks.

This advice applies not only to the true/false/don't know section, but to the comprehension in general, and indeed to the paper as a whole. Prospective candidates are reminded to take greater care in their answers. Many answers are given in incomplete sentences or still in bullet point format. This results in candidates failing to gain marks for assessment of the quality of written communication as the instructions clearly specify that candidates answer in whole sentences.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1(a) (i)

There were no problems with this question and most candidates gave correct answers.

### Question 1(a)(ii)

Candidates based their answer not on the text but on their own experience or opinion and we had responses to the question "*Którzy rodzice najwięcej czytają dzieciom?*" such as:

- Tacy którzy mają dużo czasu,*
- którzy spędzają dużo czasu w domu,*
- którzy interesują się dzieckiem.*

**Question 1(a)(iii)**

„*Co rozumie maleńkie dziecko kiedy mu czytamy?*” Many candidates confused this question with (ix) and (x). Candidates should know that two identical answers are not expected to be correct for more than one question. Candidates used to the cut and paste technique searched in vain for the word “*maleńkie dziecko*” in the text itself, which refers only to “*niemowle*”. In fact, the two are interchangeable.

**Question 1(a)(iv)**

The question “*Na czym głównie polega nauka języka?*” provided all sorts of responses not based on the text, mainly from candidates not well prepared to deal with comprehension – some examples: *na myśleniu, na mówieniu, na budowni więzi między dzieckiem a rodzicem.*

**Question 1(a)(v)**

Again, some candidates based their responses on their own ideas rather than the information in the text e.g. “*Czego uczy się roczne dziecko, któremu czytamy?*”

- *rozwija się,*
- *czuje się pewniej w szkole,*
- *zaczyna myśleć.*

**Question 1(a) (vi)**

“*Dlaczego, zdaniem autorki, wszystko dzisiaj jest postawione na głowie?*” This question gave an even wider variety of guessed answers e.g.:

- *dzieci zamiast spędzać czas z rodzicami spędzają go przed telewizorem,*
- *bo rodzice są zabiegani,*
- *rodzice spędzają za dużo czasu przed telewizorem,*
- *według rodziców dziecko uczy się oglądając bajki przed telewizorem, ale to nie zawsze prawda.*

There were no difficulties with Questions 1(a) (vii), (viii), (ix), (x), (xi), (xiii) and (xiv). Some candidates, however, did not supply enough information to get full marks.

The penultimate comment in this section concerns less able candidates who perhaps are scheduling this exam too early into their academic timetable. The impression this year was that there were many younger students sitting the AS level than in previous years. Some of these candidates struggled with the comprehension, for instance giving answers such as “*Pod maską agresji dzieci często ukrywają agresję i tupet*” in response to Question 1(a)(xii).

Answers such as these, either alone or in tandem with poorly- conceived and executed essays, seem to confirm one’s suspicion that too many candidates entered for AS are trying to run before they can walk. As a general rule, prospective students, who are barely in their teens, should be advised not to assume that they will be able to cope with A level (or AS Level), which is not purely an examination of linguistic achievement but is a test of cognitive ability too, underpinned by a certain level of emotional maturity.

Question 1(a)(xv) was the closing question and was answered very well by the majority of candidates. What might have helped was that there were three questions rolled into one. There were some interesting responses, some bearing out the author’s theories, others negating them. The allocation of marks for quality of written communication often comes down to the final question, where students are required to express their own opinion on the text, so it was a welcome change to what we have seen in the past.

## Translation

This year candidates were required to translate a passage from Polish into English about St. Andrew's day and its customs. The results were mixed, which once again suggests that the majority of candidates who sat the exam were unfamiliar to a greater or lesser extent with the English language. There were some candidates who did not attempt this section at all, but there were probably fewer of them than last year, as most of the candidates tried to render at least some of the sentences into English. However, those that did produce translation was often unintelligible at worst and barely adequate at best. In large number of instances, there were many omissions, mistakes and errors of both spelling and grammar so that communication was effectively lost. Even candidates born in England who ought to have excelled in this part of the paper failed to do so.

What can be done to improve upon these scores in future years? The problem is that the approach taken is too literal. That has always been the case. The essential message that the translations are not about words but the communication of ideas is not getting through in the classroom. In addition, there were gaps in knowledge of vocabulary, and a lack of logical thinking.

For example, for the word "*wigilia*", some candidates did not realize that the word is used in a wider context and not merely with reference to Christmas Eve.

Some examples of students' mistakes:

- We celebrate it on Christmas Eve the day of St. Andrew at night between 29th and 30 of November.
- For boys was Christmas at 24<sup>th</sup> of October.
- We celebrate it at Easter

*Patron* was translated as: resident, important figure, patriot.

*Szkocja* was confused with Sweden or Switzerland.

The expression "*z przymrużeniem oka*" proved especially difficult and was often translated as "with the eyes closed".

The final paragraph turned out to be the easiest part of the passage to translate.

## Essay

Candidates were asked to express their thoughts in at least 200 words on what should be taught in schools to prepare pupils for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The majority of essays ranged from satisfactory to very good. Last year candidates wrote passionately about bullying in schools. This year's candidates perhaps did not have quite so much to say on another aspect of school life, but nevertheless most managed to write two or three pages and mention and develop two, three or more relevant points.

Again, as mentioned before, it was felt that more mature candidates had more to say and were able to develop and present their ideas better than the younger ones.

Some candidates clearly struggled as if they did not understand the topic or did not know what to write about. They counted every word and after achieving the minimum word number just finished regardless of whether the essay had any logical structure and enough points to achieve a good mark.

Whatever the year or topic the same advice can safely be given to prospective candidates with regard to the essay: **focus on the question, answer it without digressing, and you will be fine.**

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.