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Introduction

This is the last exam for this specification.

Examiners commented that the texts about schools were accessible and candidates were able to engage with the tasks and respond appropriately.

Better candidates were able to engage fully with both texts and respond thoughtfully and articulately. Their writing responses were often engaging and effective and were well controlled and accurate. Weaker candidates sometimes struggled to understand the passages and the questions. Their writing was often pedestrian or lacked coherence and had weak language controls.

Examiners commented that a significant number of candidates did not attempt to use their own words in the questions that asked for them.

There are still candidates who copy out all or considerable sections of the extracts in response to Question 11. This can never be a successful way to respond as the candidate is required to produce their own work and show the ability to adapt the original texts for a different audience and purpose.

There are still some responses to Question 11 and 12 that lack paragraphing, not just the weaker ones. Candidates must understand that the lack of effective paragraphing will limit the success of the response.

There was evidence of some good teaching and learning in the responses and examiners commented that many candidates seemed well prepared on the whole.

Section A (Questions 1-10)

This consists of mainly short answer questions that require candidates to locate and retrieve relevant information. Some questions required candidates to use their own words. Question 10 is longer, requiring candidates to give a personal response and justify it with references to the text.

There were some very good answers to questions 1-9 but many candidates continued to have difficulty with the requirement for own words thus limiting their performance.

Questions 1, 2, 5 and 8 generally produced successful responses. Where candidates lost marks on Question 1 it was because they missed out the word 'fewer' for bullet point 2 or 'less' for bullet point 3.

Responses to Question 2 were generally successful but some candidates attempted to use their own words for points and often lost the meaning of the points they were trying to identify. Question 5 was generally well answered with only a few incorrect responses which either used the wrong text or chose points outside of the line references. Most candidates responded successfully to Question 8 although a very small number of

candidates incorrectly either identified countries or other locations mentioned in the text.

All examiners commented that responses to questions requiring candidates to use their own words (3, 4, 6, 7 and 9) quite often had direct lifting from the texts. Some examiners commented that candidates tended to use key words and phrases exactly as written in the extracts or just changed the order of the words. However some examiners commented positively on candidates' attempts to use their own words.

Some examiners commented that many candidates' responses to Question 3 were generally successful in re-wording. However examiners commented that many candidates did not use their own words for all the points and candidates often struggled to find alternatives to 'virtual campus' and 'virtual playground'. The most popular bullet points referred to successfully were 1, 2 and 7.

Responses to Question 4 also had evidence of candidates not attempting to use their own words although some examiners commented positively on the candidates' attempts to use their own words. The popular points in successful responses included bullet points 1, 3, 5, 7 and 8. Some examiners commented that there was a lot of lifting of 'social and emotional needs' and 'part of a state-wide group'. A few candidates based their answer on the wrong section of the text.

Some examiners commented that responses to Question 6 were more successful than the other 'own words' questions, but many examiners again commented that candidates did not use their own words sufficiently. The common points presented were 1, 2, 4 and 8. A number of candidates had problems re-wording 'all of them have answers and opinions' and 'their love of learning has become increased.' A few candidates based their answer on the wrong section of the text.

Question 7 - a significant number of candidates did not use their own words for their points, despite the rubric and layout of the question, which meant they could not achieve any marks. A number of candidates used quotation marks for their points which suggested they did not understand the requirement to use their own words. Similarly a number of candidates produced paraphrases of their chosen support as their point – often too close to the text to be rewarded. However the majority of candidates were able to identify relevant points and provide support for them. Some examiners commented that this question has been more successfully answered this year. Better responses clearly made a point in their own words such as 'the school is not based in one location' with an apt supporting quotation e.g. 'a travelling school'. However some examiners observed that candidates misunderstood the task and made points about the students not the school e.g. 'the students had travelled extensively' for the first point on the mark scheme. When candidates had made an appropriate point in their own words they were generally able to choose appropriate support and therefore score full marks. A small number referred to the wrong sections of the text.

Examiners noted that there were successful responses to Question 9 however there were responses which again lifted phrases from the text such as 'seeing the world with their own eyes' and 'overcoming fears'. A number of candidates wrote about the sacrifices rather than the benefits. The popular bullet points covered were 2, 3, 4 and 6.

Question 10 provided varied responses with most candidates able to make some sort of choice but only the more able could provide developed ideas and close reference to the texts that the task required. There were some clear responses to this task showing that candidates had been well prepared for this question and had a secure understanding of what is required. Better responses had clearly identified reasons and appropriate support for their choices. Many candidates mentioned levels of formality, the use of student experience, facts and figures, the use of organisations, quotations and details about the school. There were some candidates who only responded on their chosen text which limited their achievement. Examiners also commented that a number of candidates wrote about which school they liked best, rather than which writer was more successful. There were also a number of content-based responses seen by examiners. Weaker responses tended to paraphrase the texts, retelling the passages. Some weaker candidates offered very generic comments such as 'it was more interesting' or 'the writing was easier to follow'. These problems suggest that some candidates have not been prepared for this task and unfortunately this limited candidates' achievement.

Some examiners commented that the responses to this question had improved this year.

Section B (Question 11)

There was evidence of good teaching and learning in the responses to this section. There was some evidence of planning which was pleasing. The most useful plans were relatively short but allowed candidates to focus and organise their ideas effectively.

Some examiners commented positively about candidates' responses to this question and their engagement with the topic.

Most candidates were able to cover the three bullet points and gave a reasonable number of relevant points. Better responses covered all three bullets in depth and the very good responses showed a sophistication incorporating and developing ideas thoroughly and engaging with their audience. Candidates who systematically planned their response around the bullet points tended to do well demonstrating how the bullet points can help focus and organisation. Examiners commented that a significant number of candidates did not consider both texts in their response, limiting their achievement. Some candidates wrote about their own school or offered advice on which local schools were good or bad. A few wrote their thoughts on education sometimes producing responses that were more suitable for Question 12a. A number of examiners were concerned about the amount of lifting from the texts in the responses, where candidates copied key words

and phrases, or copied whole sections of the texts. The weakest candidates simply copied the texts wholesale. Copying from the original texts affected the overall quality of the response.

Most candidates understood the requirement of the task and were able to use the appropriate register for a talk to peers. It was generally felt candidates engaged with this task and some produced lively and convincing responses. The most successful responses had a strong sense of audience and purpose and included personal touches and rhetorical language to engage the audience. Many were able to use direct address, rhetorical questions, humour and other devices to sustain the interest of their audience. Some successful responses used informal language appropriately to engage their peers. Some examiners commented that a number of candidates struggled to adopt or maintain an appropriate register. Often these responses had an appropriate beginning and ending but limited appropriate register throughout the main body of the response. Weaker candidates often introduced themselves at the beginning but could not sustain the register. Others were too formal, written as discursive writing or relied too heavily on long sections of material from the texts.

Language controls were not always secure, especially grammar.

Section C (Question 12)

12b was the most popular question.

There was evidence of some good preparation and teaching in this section. There was evidence of planning which is to be encouraged. Examiners, as always, commented on how much they enjoyed reading the responses in this section.

Question 12a produced some well written responses with ambitious vocabulary and clear and developed arguments. The better ones had good vocabulary and were constructed using a range of devices for effect. Some examiners commented positively about the quality of some of the responses.

Candidates who were very successful with this response had adopted an argumentative style of writing and tended to explore the question from both sides of the argument looking at what a 'good education' might afford you but also looking at ways to counteract lack of education.

Most candidates based their discussion around the importance of a good education and what it meant. Most concluded that education was indeed a good start to life and also indicated what might not be so good about not receiving a good education, to add balance to their argument. Many drew on their own personal experiences and what their parents had taught them. Many saw the benefits of education on their personalities and their self development as well as education being the way to jobs, money or happiness. Only a few candidates argued that a good education is not always necessary and that many with a good education have not done well

in life or gave examples of highly successful individuals who were failures at school.

Less successful responses tended to tell the story of their own education so far and what was good or bad about it. Weaker candidates had problems with both maintaining a clear argument and structuring their responses. Some candidates used material from the texts despite the rubric.

Better responses were fully controlled with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar, however the weaker responses had poor language controls and weak paragraphing.

Question 12b: The title 'The Inspiration' produced some lively and imaginative responses. Most examiners enjoyed reading the responses to this question.

The vast majority of candidates who attempted this question were able to produce a narrative with a reasonably clear plot. More successful candidates produced stories with clear narrative progression. Better responses were fully controlled with accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar.

There were a variety of inspirations from the obvious (parents) to the genuinely moving (usually a mentor/teacher of some kind). Most of the inspirations were, rather predictably, family members, sporting heroes and pop idols. Many candidates wrote passionately about how a family member had been an inspiration in their lives. Sometimes the response was an account of how the person had influenced the candidate rather than a narrative, losing opportunities to employ a variety of literary devices and vocabulary. Better candidates produced creative and imaginative responses e.g. facing a difficult situation, only to meet someone or experience something which went on to profoundly affect and inspire them. Some examiners commented that there was some evidence of candidates using prepared essays with only a little attempt to adapt them to the title given. Weaker responses lacked development of ideas or the ability to maintain a narrative, together with poor language controls.

Question 12c: Examiners commented that there were some interesting responses to this title. Better responses were detailed and lively with fully developed ideas. Where candidates were successful they worked hard to paint a picture of their school, college or place of study and there were some imaginative descriptions that focused not just on the physicality of the place of study but also the candidates experience. Some candidates were able to offer detailed descriptions of the place they looked at as 'a second home' creating a sense of peace, hope and belonging. However examiners commented that many candidates simply described the buildings, layouts, classrooms and subjects taught. At times these responses were pedestrian. Some examiners commented that the descriptions were sometimes rather hyperbolic exaggerating the greatness of their school and presenting a very idyllic and romanticised view of the teachers and the teaching which did not always ring true or sound convincing. Most candidates chose to describe their school or college but some did describe other places e.g. libraries,

parks, their bedrooms. Less successful responses tended to be list-like and lacked detail and development of ideas.

Better responses had full control of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Weaker candidates had poor language controls and weak paragraphing.

Quality of Written Communication (QWC)

This is assessed in Questions 11 and 12.

Better responses were accurate using a wide range of grammatical constructions, punctuation and vocabulary.

As in previous series, there was evidence of good spelling and reasonably accurate punctuation but most examiners commented on candidates who had problems with grammar and expression. Some of this was unidiomatic English but there were also problems with tenses and sentence structure including missing words. These problems limited the effectiveness of the communication.

Examiners also commented on incorrect use of capital letters and missing capitalisation for the personal pronoun, comma splicing, missing apostrophes and misspelling of common homophones.

Some examiners commented positively about the wide range of vocabulary used but unfortunately candidates do not always use it appropriately and their writing is sometimes unconvincing because of this.

Summary

Most successful candidates:

- read the texts with insight and engagement
- selected relevant points in response to the reading questions
- used their own words in response to questions that required them
- wrote clearly with a good sense of audience and purpose in an appropriate register in response to Question 11
- were able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 11
- engaged the reader with creative writing that was clearly expressed, well developed and controlled (Question 12)
- used ambitious vocabulary
- wrote with accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Least successful candidates:

- did not engage fully with the texts
- were not able to find enough relevant points in response to the reading questions
- did not attempt to use their own words in response to questions that required them
- did not write in an appropriate register in response to Question 11
- were not able to select and adapt relevant information for Question 11
- sometimes copied from the original texts in response to Question 11
- were not able to sustain and develop ideas clearly in response to Section C (Question 12)
- did not demonstrate accuracy in spelling, punctuation and grammar.

