

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/01

Listening

General comments

The Paper was found to be of a similar level of difficulty to papers in previous sessions and was in general accessible to candidates. This year the candidature increased again and, as always, a full range of performance was seen. Many candidates scored marks in the 30's or above and it was particularly pleasing to Examiners to see the large number of high-scoring candidates. Such work showed evidence of good levels of attainment in both specific and general comprehension tasks.

This year, candidates were instructed to attempt all three sections of the test. This seemed to be well understood and there were very few candidates who could not attempt some of the questions in the last section. A range of question types is used in the test and there is an incline of difficulty on the Paper. The French heard gradually increases in terms of length and density. Questions move from the identification of short factual information to the need to understand and identify opinions, explanations and narrated accounts in different tenses.

New Centres should note that even in questions requiring a written response in French, the questions are prepared so as to reduce the amount of French which candidates have to produce. This remains a test of comprehension and Examiners do not expect complete sentences in response. Inaccurate responses that sound and/or read like French are accepted, provided the message is clear.

Most candidates had been well prepared in Centres and were well aware of the demands of the examination. A few candidates ticked more than one box in response to the multiple choice items in the very first exercise. Likewise, in **Exercise 1** of **Section 2** some candidates ticked only four boxes, or ticked more than six. It is crucial that Centres ensure that candidates are familiar with all question rubrics before they attempt the examination. Familiarity with these can only aid candidates and help to reassure them. Candidates should also be reminded to make their intentions clear when crossing out answers which they do not want Examiners to consider. This is especially important on multiple choice questions.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8

This exercise tested the comprehension of short conversations of a factual nature. Candidates generally performed well with many scoring high marks. **Questions 3-5** were less well done than other questions, however incorrect responses revealed no general pattern.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-16

Candidates generally performed well on this exercise. They were required to tick boxes and complete very short notes (one word/number) on the topic of holiday house details heard in a telephone conversation. Most candidates did well on **Questions 9, 12 and 15**. **Questions 13, 14 and 16** were less well done. The second number on the last question was often given as 45.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 17

A full range of marks was scored on this exercise, with a pleasing number of candidates scoring full marks. Candidates listened to four young people talking about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and the ways in which people stay fit and then had to identify six correct statements from a list of twelve. There was no pattern to the incorrect options chosen by candidates.

Exercise 2

This exercise type was used for the first time in 2006. Overall, it worked well giving more able candidates some challenging questions whilst providing accessible questions for candidates of average ability.

Part 1 – Questions 18-22

Candidates heard the first part of an interview with a marathon runner and were then required to correct one detail in each of five statements in French. Candidates understood the exercise type well. Most understood that Hakim ran at a speed of 20km per hour in **Question 18** and in **Question 19** many correctly identified the concept of suffering. However, some spellings of *souffrir* were very poor: Examiners accepted various forms of the verb, but did not accept *souflir*, *souflair*, *soufer*, *sofir*. In **Question 20**, Examiners were looking for the idea of mental effort – attempts to convey this concept such as *de tête* were accepted. The most common mistake here was for candidates to give the answer to **Question 21**. On **Question 21** the required concept of *solitude* was, however, correctly identified by many candidates. Regrettably, on **Question 22**, some invalidated their answer by the inaccurate rendering of *un mois* as *moi*. Examiners could not accept this answer as the word produced was a different French word with a different meaning.

Part 2 – Questions 23-25

After hearing the second part of the interview, candidates were required to respond to questions with short answers in French. On **Question 23**, many correctly identified *chaleur* even if they were not always able to spell the word. Candidates were usually able to identify *pollution* in **Question 24(a)**, but answers to **(b)** were less successful. Although many candidates understood that cars were involved, they did not understand, or could not convey, the idea that what Hakim did not like was that these cars were close to the runners. On **Question 25**, Examiners were looking for two ideas: training and the love/joy of the sport. Although *entraînement* proved difficult to spell, many managed to convey the concept.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 26-31

Candidates heard an interview with a young Japanese author who had just spent time in France. The questions tested both specific and general comprehension. As was the case last year, candidates found the exercise fairly accessible and this was partly due to the care setters had taken to reduce the amount of French to be read while candidates listened to the stimulus material. It was encouraging to see that candidates who were weaker and who went on to score no marks on the last exercise often made a good attempt at this exercise and in particular the first three questions. **Question 31** was often incorrectly answered by candidates, who frequently opted for *B* rather than *A*. Those who were successful on this question had followed the sequence of events well, making it a good test of higher level discriminatory skills. Other questions did not show any pattern of incorrect answers.

Exercise 2 Questions 32-39

This last exercise was, as intended, the most demanding on the Paper. Candidates heard an interview with a young French girl, Amélie, who had been on a long trip with her father. This exercise required candidates not only to follow the order of events, but also to be able to recognise reasons for actions and explanations of ideas/opinions. The last few questions also required the ability to make comparisons between the different emotions felt by the father and daughter. Generally, although weaker candidates found most of these testing last questions very demanding, the more able fared well. Most could come up with *son anniversaire* on **Question 32**, but fewer recognised that *trop* was a crucial part of the answer to **Question 33**. In **Question 34** while weaker candidates seemed aware of some of the ideas expressed in the recording, they hadn't grasped that while Amélie was initially really pleased, she was then somewhat apprehensive. Long answers were not required, for example *ravie* was adequate for the first part of the

answer and the second part could have been answered by *elle a hésité*. **Question 35** could have been answered by the single word, *Paris*. **Question 36** required some notion that Amélie and her father were tired after their trip. Examiners saw some very good answers which quoted the time difference being the cause of their lack of sleep. In **Question 37**, some candidates correctly identified the notion of Amélie wanting to get away from her father, but distorted their answers by adding detail which clouded the message, eg *se séparer avec son père*. For **Question 38**, candidates needed to identify that Amélie's father was more relaxed/more open/less stressed: concepts of 'more' or 'less' were needed here. On the last question, **Question 39**, Examiners were looking for answers along the lines of Amélie respecting her father more and understanding him better.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/02

Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

This was the first year that all candidates were expected to attempt all three sections of the paper. Candidates seemed to have been well prepared for the requirements of the examination: only a very small percentage made no attempt at **Section 3**, and most were able to score some marks.

There were no signs that candidates had not had enough time to complete the paper, and it was pleasing to see the care taken in the majority of scripts to answer to the best of their ability. Legibility and presentation were generally satisfactory.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Questions 1, 2 and 4 were generally correctly answered, but for **Question 3** sometimes the answer chosen was B, and for **Question 5**, it was clear that many candidates did not understand *péage*, often opting for A or D as their answer.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

This was generally very well done, and many candidates scored full marks, though **Question 7** was sometimes given as *faux* and for **Question 10** candidates needed to understand the connection between *vendre* and *acheter*.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

Again, most candidates scored full marks here, with the occasional one or two opting for F as their answer to **Questions 12 or 14**.

Exercise 4 Question 16

Here, candidates needed to be able to come up with appropriate vocabulary, such as *anniversaire* (found with many spelling variations), and *danser*, together with the correct formulation of the date shown in the picture (rather than a date selected by the candidate).

Most scored 2 or 3 marks for communication, but verb forms often caused difficulties, and candidates often failed to score both language marks. Examiners were sympathetic to attempts to use an appropriate tense.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-25

This exercise was done very well, and the majority of candidates showed clearly that they had understood the text. Examiners accepted the use of a variety of pronouns and possessives in answers to allow candidates to score for their comprehension. In **Question 17**, it was apparent that some candidates had confused *Où...?* with *Qui...?* and accordingly gave the names of the friends as their answer. The only other question which caused any difficulty was **Question 22** where some candidates thought Manon had to stay in the garden to look after her little brother, rather than because she knew nobody in Biarritz. Candidates

sometimes misunderstood *temps* in **Question 24** and supplied a date, but many came up with acceptable answers to **Question 25**.

Exercise 2 Question 26

This question proved very accessible to almost all candidates, with very few failing to obey the rubric, and towns and regions from all over the world were chosen and described with great enthusiasm. Many scored full marks, with the occasional mark lost when a candidate omitted to give any details as to the part of the world, or country they were writing about. A few candidates filled up the space with a list of activities which could be undertaken in their chosen place, but many provided detailed description and reasons why they liked the town or region. In a few cases, candidates had problems with spellings, such as *beaucoup*, *parce que/parce qu'* and *il y a*, which was frequently written as one or two words rather than three. Past participles also caused some difficulties, but many candidates were able to write with fair accuracy.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

As was the case last year, some candidates only ticked the *vrai/faux* boxes, without writing any sentences themselves, and some provided a justification for a sentence for which they had ticked *vrai*, but this addition made no difference to their mark for that question. Some candidates seemed not to read the question sufficiently carefully and consequently supplied not only the correct answer, but also lifted extra material from the text which sometimes invalidated their answer.

Most candidates were able to provide appropriate sentences to correct the statements in **Questions 27** and **28**. For **Question 27**, the answer looked for was either *what* they intended to do after their studies, or *when* they intended to make their trip. For **Question 28**, the answer looked for was *why* they wanted to save money. **Question 29** was usually correctly ticked *vrai*. **Question 30** caused some problems as many candidates chose to lift a sentence from the text in its entirety, and many candidates answered with something along the lines of *c'est une idée folle, que ce sera beaucoup trop difficile*. Candidates generally realised that **Question 31** was *faux* and that the important element of the answer was *rencontres*. **Question 32** was *vrai*, though more candidates were divided about this.

Exercise 2 Questions 33-41

Almost all candidates felt able to answer something from this exercise. The text was generally understood, but candidates had some problems being sufficiently selective, and often lost marks by including too much extra material which then contradicted the correct answer.

For **Question 33**, many candidates took their answer from the end of the text, rather than from the very beginning. The answer looked for was something straightforward, along the lines of *ses deux étoiles*, but many candidates offered *un des meilleurs chefs du pays* or lifted the last sentence of the first paragraph in its entirety. **Question 34** also required careful selection, since it asked for Marcel's family situation *avant l'âge de 7 ans* – candidates who said that he was adopted did not score for this answer, since the important detail was that *il avait été abandonné par ses parents*. **Question 35** required a reference to Marcel's mother's cooking, but the answer was often invalidated by the addition of *d'ailleurs*, lifted from the text. Most candidates managed an appropriate answer for **Question 36** although some gave *douze heures par jour* plus either *la chaleur* or *le stress*, which Examiners were looking for as an answer to **Question 37**. In **Question 38** there was a tendency for candidates to offer *il obtient finalement une place de chef* as their response. For **Question 39**, Examiners looked only for Marcel's reaction, rather than the physical detail that he had lost an arm. **Question 40** proved challenging, as candidates needed to supply several details to score: the first part required *il concentre toute son énergie*, and for the second part, candidates needed to make it clear that *chaque jour il se donnait/donne une tâche plus difficile*. Many opted for *j'ai décidé de prouver que je pouvais encore faire ce métier* as one of their answers, which could not score. **Question 41** was generally answered well, either by reference to *force de caractère* or by candidates thinking of a different way to express this, using their own words. Some candidates, however, lifted the whole of the last sentence: the reference to *qualités de cuisinier* invalidated an otherwise correct answer.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/03

Speaking

General comments

This Paper was common to all candidates who had followed both a Core Curriculum and an Extended Curriculum course. The full range of marks was available to all candidates and as in 2006, a wide range of performance was heard by Moderators.

Generally, the standards heard were very similar to those heard last year. Examining was usually good and in most cases candidates were given plenty of opportunities to show what they knew and could do. The majority of Examiners were familiar with both the test requirements and the mark scheme, and were therefore able to ask questions at an appropriate level and allow their candidates to show themselves to best advantage. Some Examiners, however, did not seem suitably familiar with the format of the test and consequently disadvantaged their candidates.

It remains encouraging to hear the professional conduct of the test in the majority of Centres. The Speaking Test is a crucial component of IGCSE French as it enables candidates to show how well they can communicate in everyday situations and their performance bears witness to the hard work and effective learning prevalent in many IGCSE classrooms.

Administration

Regrettably, this year all Moderators reported a large rise in the number of clerical errors made in Centres. This was extremely disappointing. Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to ensure the correct addition and transcription of all marks for candidates. It is unacceptable to submit work containing clerical errors which, on occasion, can seriously disadvantage candidates.

Quality of recording

On the whole this was good, though a handful of Centres submitted very poor recordings, including some tapes which were blank or inaudible. It is important to test all equipment in the room in which the test will take place prior to the test. If Centres are using machines with integral microphones the machine should be positioned to favour the candidate.

Examiners are reminded that they should identify the candidates on the recording by announcing each candidate's name and number followed by the number of the Role Play card being attempted. Please note: it is the Examiner who should make these announcements and not the candidates themselves. Also, once the recording for a candidate has been started, the tape should not be paused between the different sections of the test. Cassettes and boxes should be carefully labelled.

Duration of tests/missing elements

Most Centres adhered closely to the prescribed timings, but this year Moderators reported a greater incidence of tests which were unacceptably short or from which whole sections were missing. Centres are reminded that each candidate must attempt two Role plays (one Role play A and one Role play B), a Topic conversation section (lasting 5 minutes) and a General conversation section (lasting another 5 minutes). Where conversation sections fell short of the stipulated five minutes, questioning was often too superficial to allow candidates to fulfil the assessment criteria. Some Centres omitted the General conversation section entirely, but awarded their candidates marks as if it had been completed. Centres are reminded that they grossly disadvantage their candidates if they leave out a section of the test. In such cases, Moderators have no other choice but to reduce the marks for a Centre: marks cannot be awarded for work which is not attempted!

When examining the Role plays, Centres are reminded of the need to stick to the set tasks and that all parts of the set tasks are attempted. Marks cannot be awarded for tasks not attempted. It is essential that Examiners are familiar with their role in the Role plays. Centres may open the candidate's Teacher's Notes booklet four working days in advance of their first Speaking test in order to allow the teacher/Examiners to prepare for the examination. (Please note, this booklet is confidential and must remain in the Centre in secure conditions during any preparation time and its contents must not be divulged to candidates.)

Application of the mark scheme

The mark scheme was generally well applied in Centres and marking was often close to the agreed standard. Where marks did need adjusting it was usually for one of the following reasons:

- Failure to complete all the Role play tasks
- Short and/or missing Topic conversation and General conversation sections
- Lack of questions to elicit a variety of tenses in the conversation sections.

Centres wishing to use more than one Examiner to conduct and assess the Speaking tests for their candidates are reminded that they must seek permission to do so from the Product Manager at CIE well before the Speaking test period. If more than one Examiner is used in a Centre, internal moderation must take place before marks and recordings are submitted to CIE for external moderation. A common standard of marking should be applied to the whole candidature and a sample of 6 candidates submitted to cover the work of all teaching groups.

Comments on specific questions

Role Plays

Centres are reminded to encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each task. Examiners should ensure that they do not miss out or change any tasks, nor should they add extra tasks which can confuse candidates. Marks can only be awarded for completing the tasks as presented on the Role play cards. If only one part of a task is completed then only one mark should be awarded.

Role Plays A

As usual, The **A** Role plays were perceived to be of equal difficulty and a fair test at this level. They are designed to be easier than **B** Role plays and are set using vocabulary and topics from the Defined Content (Areas A, B and C). Candidates generally found them accessible and even the weaker candidates were able to score at least one mark on each task.

At the restaurant

Some candidates missed out the first part of the task and did not ask for a table. Nearly all could say where they wanted to sit and could ask for a main course and a drink. Some of the pronunciation on the food and drink was dubious – Examiners should always feel free to query such mispronunciation. Likewise, *carte de crédit* was poorly pronounced. Some chose to pay with the Examiner's credit card: *Je peux payer avec votre carte de credit?*

At the tourist office

Generally, this was well attempted, but, as last year, the pronunciation of *billet* was poor. Most were able to cope quite well with asking about reductions and were able to say how many tickets they wanted and ask the price. Candidates could usually formulate a question on the last task. New Centres should note that asking a question is a frequent task at this level and candidates need to be trained not just to respond to questions from the Examiner, but also to formulate simple questions.

At the bus station

Candidates remembered to greet the employee, but sometimes found the pronunciation of *Marseille* difficult. They were not penalised for this. For the third task, some Examiners changed the prompt, giving times other than those provided by CIE. Examiners are reminded not to change the content of the tasks. In Task 4 there were frequent mistakes such as *billet retourner*. The last task was well done.

Role Plays B

The **B** Role plays were more demanding in that they required the ability to use different tenses to explain, excuse or justify as appropriate. Candidates should be reminded to include such notions where they are part of the task as they sometimes missed them out. These Role plays differentiated well across candidature, but sympathetic examining helped even the weakest candidates to score some marks.

Phoning a French friend

Most candidates were able to convey that they were in Paris, but some did not apologise on Task 2. Most were able to say what they were going to do in Paris in an appropriate tense, but *La Tour Eiffel* is still poorly pronounced. Weaker candidates were not always able to express themselves in a perfect tense on Task 4 and some confused the tense required in the last task when trying to say when exactly they would arrive. The last part of Task 5, asking the friend to the restaurant, also proved difficult.

Phoning a language school

The first task was well done, but only the best candidates could formulate a response using *depuis* in Task 2. Nearly all, however, could respond (and some with humour!) as to whether they found French difficult. Again, weaker candidates found it difficult to use a perfect tense correctly on the fourth task but the last task was well done and produced a variety of questions.

Arranging a birthday party

Some candidates (and, regrettably, a few poorly prepared Examiners) were unsure as to who was organising the party. The first two tasks were, however, well attempted by candidates. Some forgot, or were unable, to say that their parents were in agreement with the idea of the party. They also found it difficult to ask the friend to help. Most were able to communicate what they had already done, such as buying the food and drink or sending out invitations. Only the best candidates responded enthusiastically on the last task. Nearly all were able to say what they were going to buy as a birthday present.

Topic Conversation

A full range of performance was heard by Moderators. Those candidates who had received proper guidance on their choice of topic, were not allowed to talk uninterrupted for more than a minute or two on this topic, and whose initial presentation was followed by spontaneous questioning so as to prompt a genuine conversation, were a pleasure to listen to.

Most Centres conducted this section of the test well and Moderators were generally impressed by the ability of the candidates to talk in an engaging way, using a good range of vocabulary, tenses and structures with confidence. Moderators reported a wide range of appropriate topics. There were (thankfully) very few cases of candidates choosing *Moi-même* as their topic: candidates should be advised against this topic as it severely restricts the possibilities for General conversation. Candidates usually chose topics which were suited to their linguistic ability. It was interesting to hear an increased number of topics on environmental issues such as conservation and recycling in various parts of the world. Life in another country/school remain popular topics. There were also some very good accounts of holidays and future career plans which revealed how much candidates valued their education and the opportunities this afforded. Teachers would be delighted to hear how many candidates in so many parts of the world had enjoyed their experience of school life. The best examining ensured that candidates were asked questions to elicit a variety of tenses (in the conversation sections candidates must show they can convey past and future meaning to score 7 or more for linguistic content (Scale (b))).

General Conversation

It was helpful to Moderators that Examiners usually indicated the point of transition to the final section of the test. Most Examiners fulfilled the requirements of the General conversation section, asking questions which differed from candidate to candidate on at least 2 or 3 topics. Likewise, most Examiners were aware of the need to give candidates the opportunity to work in a variety of tenses. There was a full range of performance and Examiners were usually successful in adjusting the level of their questioning to match the level of the candidate. Candidates frequently talked about their daily life and many were able to make interesting comparisons with life in another country. It was pleasing to hear candidates of all abilities working hard to convey their ideas and opinions.

It was interesting to realise that whatever their geographical location, many of these International candidates shared the same interests, thoughts, preoccupations, and, perhaps, most importantly, aspirations. It was clear that many teachers and candidates had worked hard prior to the test and had found their language study a worthwhile experience.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/04
Continuous Writing

General comments

Examiners found much to commend in the overall performance of candidates. Their approach was usually very positive and enthusiastic. Many seized the opportunity to display their knowledge of the French language in an interesting and original form. Shortcomings were due in the main to flaws in examination technique which will be addressed in this Report.

Given the discursive nature of both **1(a)** and **1(b)** there was a tendency for candidates to engage in too many abstractions and generalities at the expense of personal experience. For instance, some wandered too far from the topic of tourism into the wider question of world pollution in general and found their French was unable to cope. The best responses on this paper are nearly always based on the candidate's own personal experiences and views. **Question 1(a)** on tourism invited them to draw on knowledge of their own local environment and their own experiences as tourists, so the opportunity to write a personal piece was offered, though not always taken up. **Question 1(b)** invited candidates to write about how they personally benefit from modern technology. The straightforward answers scored well. The attempts at abstract debate often foundered. Similarly, in **Question 2** the best answers were usually those which stayed within the world of the familiar. They described domestic routine and looking after small children, combining elements of the unexpected to add a dash of interest and originality. Candidates who invented wildly ambitious and improbable accounts often ran into linguistic difficulties which could have been avoided.

Other instances of poor technique included the use of long lists of nouns or place names, which involve no linguistic manipulation and attract no credit in the Mark Scheme. Verbatim lifting of whole sections of the rubric is not rewarded either and this was common. There was an increased incidence of misreading the rubric this year. Examiners are lenient when distortion results from an apparently genuine misunderstanding, but there are limits to what is acceptable. In extreme cases, when an answer bears no relation to the question set, a mark of 0 is given. It was disappointing to observe so many candidates losing potential marks due to a failure to copy words such as *l'environnement* and *tourisme* from the Question Paper.

Candidates should be reminded that the completion of each task set is rewarded with specific marks for communication. Some of these tasks were routinely omitted (such as the narrator's reaction in **Question 2**) and marks were automatically lost as a result. The problem of the over long essay does not go away. Again, it is important to stress that material which appears outside the 140-word limit is not read by Examiners and will not acquire marks.

Examiners observed again that many performances were uneven, with higher marks being obtained for **Question 1** than for **Question 2**. This was partly due to the prescriptive nature of **Question 1**, where the Candidate is given a framework for his/her answer, compared to the open-ended 'make up your own story' character of **Question 2**, which makes modest demands on creative and imaginative skills. Also the Present tense comes more easily to candidates than the Perfect tense which is the basic requirement for a narrative. Frequent practice in the use of past tenses of regular and irregular verbs in the preparation for this Paper would be beneficial.

Accuracy in the handling of basic structures is the key to high marks for language. So many candidates sacrifice large numbers of marks due to carelessness while writing everyday French. Careful revision of what one has written is essential to eliminate unnecessary errors. Also, candidates should heed the old advice that if they do not know how to say something, they should not attempt to say it. It is free composition after all. If candidates do not know how to say, for instance, 'I like to experience other cultures in other countries' they should write something simpler such as 'I like visiting ancient sites' or 'I like to practise foreign languages'. Examiners wish to reward what candidates can say, not penalise what they are unable to say.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1(a) Tourism

This question attracted more answers than **1(b)**. Candidates from around the world were able to draw on their knowledge of their own local tourist attractions and some interesting responses were received. Most referred to local landmarks or beauty spots, museums, theme parks, beaches or hotels. The communication mark could be obtained simply for linking their town or region to several local attractions by means of a simple phrase such as *il y a*. Some ignored the need to refer to *les attractions* and lost a mark by referring to only one.

Most were able to answer that they enjoyed or did not enjoy being a tourist and why. Many said they liked discovering new places and learning about how other people lived. However, a number did not understand the question as being about their own activities as tourists and wrote about other tourists visiting their region or about working in the tourist industry.

The question 'are you for or against tourism?' inspired some interesting responses from the better candidates. Predictably, most were in favour. They said it fuelled the economy, provided jobs and was beneficial to international relations. There were disadvantages of course such as overcrowding, inflated prices and noise. Sadly, a number merely copied out the rubric, saying tourism caused pollution and environmental problems, with no expansion. No credit was given in such cases.

Others saw this as a chance to revisit an earlier essay about pollution on a world scale and lost sight of the tourism aspect.

Question 1(b) Technology

Although this question attracted fewer responses than **1(a)**, some of the best answers were received for this topic, which clearly held a great interest for a number of our candidates.

All said they had computers and mobile phones and made great use of them. Computers speeded things up and were vital for doing homework. They also provided endless entertainment in the shape of music and games. Phones were essential for keeping in touch with friends and parents and for personal safety. The Internet was referred to regularly as a source of information and a means of communication. Modern technology made life easier. More ambitious candidates attempted to imagine what life would be like if there were no computers or mobile phones. Unthinkable! Some discussed technology in the world in general and referred to technology in business and transport. Others went farther and took the question beyond the everyday and confronted unnecessary linguistic difficulties.

Finding negative aspects other than those referred to in the rubric proved difficult for many and this side of the question was often treated in a sketchy manner. Many merely copied the rubric and gained no marks either for language or communication. Others succeeded in saying that the overuse of these appliances, and television too, led to obesity, poor eyesight, laziness and poor social skills. Family life suffered. Normal activities such as sports and enjoying the outdoors were neglected as the young became a generation of couch potatoes. There was a degree of self awareness here as candidates included themselves in the mass of young people addicted to their gadgets.

Question 2 Babysitting

This was no doubt a familiar situation for many young people and some lively and imaginative pieces were presented.

There were a number of different approaches to this narrative. The stories sometimes began with the narrator entering an empty house and spending the evening searching for lost infants. Others had a dreadful time while horrible little monsters ran riot around the home smashing plates and throwing food in all directions. Animals in the shape of cats and dogs were equally difficult and had the habit of running off leading to yet more searches. The gallant narrator was reduced to bribing his/her charges with sweets and other treats to restore order. Others related accidents or sudden illness which involved calling in police and/or ambulances. The less dramatic accounts told of children refusing to eat what the narrator had cooked for their evening meal or refusing to go to bed. Less obliging babysitters took advantage of the situation to invite round all their friends for a party, with dire consequences. Yet others found the children to be delightful company and described a quiet night spent playing games, reading books and watching television. It must be said that these less outrageous accounts seemed to hold fewer linguistic difficulties for the story teller.

A minority misunderstood the rubric and thought they took the children to the cinema or that the question were their own. This would indicate that they were in a hurry and did not read the question carefully enough.

An element which was disappointingly handled this time was the reaction of the narrator to the events of the evening. Communication marks were awarded to those who obeyed the rubric and included a reaction. This did not need to be particularly subtle. It was enough to say *j'avais peur, je ne savais pas quoi faire* or *j'étais surpris/choqué/étonné/fâché/heureux* etc.

All usually ended amicably, when the parents came home to find the children asleep in bed. Thanks were expressed and payment rendered with no mention of the mayhem which occurred earlier. In other accounts the parents blamed the hapless babysitter for all the damage caused by the children or the dog and withheld any payment. The narrator often vowed never to be a babysitter ever again. In other stories they became life long friends with the children. The parental reactions varied from pleasure to anger or dismay. Unfortunately many stories exceeded the 140-word limit and this final communication mark was lost.

Common linguistic errors included the inappropriate use of *chercher* with *la maison* as a direct object, inconsistent genders and spelling of repeated words, the confusion of the direct and indirect object pronouns *lui* and *le* and their misplacement (*j'ai leur parlé*), the use of *ses* for *leurs*, *écouter* for *entendre*, *retourner* for *revenir* or *rentrer*, *trop* for *beaucoup*, *crier* or even *pleuvoir* for *pleurer* and *parler* for *dire*. As ever, Examiners stress the importance to the narrative of verbs correctly expressed in perfect and imperfect tenses. Only a minority seem to master the pluperfect. So many answers were spoilt by the mixing of present and past tenses and erratic verb formations, including the frequent omission of the all important acute accent on past participles of -er verbs. As stated earlier, basic errors of language take a heavy toll on those who pay insufficient attention to detail.

Finally, a word on presentation. Some scripts are clear and legible, a pleasure to read. Sadly these are often the exception. The number of very untidy scripts seems to increase every year and the incidence of ambiguous and or minuscule handwriting is a worry. Examiners will give the benefit of the doubt to the candidate in most cases, but there are limits to what can and cannot be credited when the writing is so misshapen as in some of this year's offerings.