

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/01

Listening

General comments

This Paper was found to be accessible to candidates and to be of a similar level of difficulty to the November 2008 Paper. Candidates are instructed to attempt all three sections of the test. This was well understood and there were very few candidates who did not go on to attempt **Section 3**, the last and most difficult section of the paper. The French heard by candidates gradually increased in terms of length and density and the emphasis of the questions moved from targeting candidates' ability to pick out information contained in short factual pieces to requiring them to identify opinions and understand and identify explanations within narrated accounts in different tenses.

The candidature increased yet again this year and a full range of performance was seen by Examiners. Many candidates were able to score above half marks, showing sound levels of attainment in both specific and general comprehension tasks.

Generally, candidates had been well prepared in Centres and were aware of the demands of the examination, but candidates should be reminded to read all the instructions with care and to tick the specified number of boxes.

New Centres should note that where questions require written responses in French, these responses do not need to be written in the form of full sentences. Questions are set in such a way as to make brief answers possible. This paper is a test of comprehension and inaccuracies are tolerated, provided that the message is clear. If the answers sound and read like French, they will be accepted. However, where candidates add extra information, which distorts an otherwise valid answer, invalidates it or places the Examiner in the position of having to pick out the correct answer from amongst the information given, the mark cannot be awarded. Centres should remind candidates to use the pauses on the recordings to read the questions carefully and not to add extra details to answers which may distort an otherwise correct response. Material which candidates do not wish the Examiner to consider should be clearly crossed out. Candidates should be told not to write first attempts in pencil and then overwrite their answers in pen as this can make responses very difficult to read. As last year, Examiners noted that some candidates, on multiple choice objective questions requiring one box to be ticked, had ticked a provisional answer in pencil and then made a final choice of answer in ink, but had not deleted the original tick in pencil. Candidates must be warned not to do this: if a candidate makes 2 choices whether in pencil or ink, the mark **cannot** be awarded.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Question 1-8

This exercise was very accessible and, as intended, even the weakest candidates were successful on two or three of these multiple-choice questions. Short extracts of factual information were heard and topic areas covered included times, food, transport, shops and furniture. Candidates made a confident start on this exercise with no clear pattern of incorrect responses. The most demanding question was **Question 8**, where *armoire* was not always well known.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-16

In this exercise, candidates usually had to indicate their response by ticking one of three boxes. **Question 9** required one word, *cantine*, and **Question 12** required a time, which could be written in words or given in figures. On **Question 9**, some incorrectly wrote *collège* and some candidates misheard *cantine* as *camping*. **Question 10** and **Question 11** were usually answered correctly, but occasionally there were errors on

Question 12, where some answered *19h15*. Of the last four questions, **Question 16** was done.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 17

This section featured four young people talking about television and the part it played in their lives. Candidates were required to tick six boxes **only** from the twelve options offered. Candidates usually performed fairly well on this exercise, but found option 'l' the most difficult option to identify.

Exercise 2 Questions 18-22

In this exercise, candidates heard the first part of an interview with Mensah talking about a school on Togo. Candidates had to correct one incorrect detail in each of five statements. Most offered an acceptable spelling of *littérature* on **Question 18**, though some offered *français*. On **Question 19** there was sometimes confusion between *compagne* and *campagne* and on **Question 20** the answer *uncle* was often given for *oncle*. Good attempts were made at *triste* on **Question 21**. Overall, the exercise was attempted well by most candidates.

Exercise 2 Questions 23-27

The continuation of the interview was heard and candidates were required to give **short** responses in French. On **Question 23**, misspellings of *roman* were common. A single word, *livre* or *roman*, was sufficient for the mark to be awarded. Incorrect answers of *parler avec ses amis* were frequently seen. On **Question 24**, many failed to pick out the word *solide*. On **Question 25**, candidates fared better and a good number correctly identified the concept of publishing/selling/distributing the book. It was surprising to see how many candidates could not spell *livre* correctly. **Question 26** required the notion of selling the book *en France*. **Question 27** proved to be the most demanding in this section: to score the mark, answers needed to convey the idea of encouraging friendship/making friends. Many misheard *amitié* as *métier*, which conveyed a very different concept and had to be treated as distortion. Generally, this part of the second exercise was done a little less well than in 2008.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 28-33

This exercise was perhaps a little more accessible than in 2008. Candidates heard an interview with a young singer, Raphaël, talking about his work and daily routine – very accessible topic areas. There was no particular pattern of incorrect answers on this exercise, but candidates generally performed better on the last three questions than on the first three.

Exercise 2 Questions 34-42

This final exercise required candidates to write short answers in French and proved to be suitably challenging. An interview with a young French girl, Léa, who was studying Japanese was heard and questions required candidates to demonstrate their understanding of both factual information and opinions in a variety of tenses. Long answers were **not** required, but many found it difficult to write accurately enough to communicate the required information.

Generally, the performance was fair with most candidates managing to score some marks on the easier questions (**Question 38**, **Question 40** and **Question 42**). On **Question 34**, many correctly identified the idea of a different culture. On **Question 35**, Examiners accepted the idea of changing school or friends or that the school was a long way away. On **Question 36(a)**, the wording of the question meant that the one-word response *dessin* was sufficient (though *dessin* was **not** always well known by candidates). **Question 36(b)** proved more challenging with the required concept being a lot of practice. On **Question 37**, the word *chiffres* was quite well known and even weaker candidates were able to score a mark for the idea of determination in **Question 38**. In **Question 39**, *une visite au Japon* was sufficient to score the mark, but if the inclusion of a verb in the wrong time frame distorted the answer, e.g. *elle ira au Japon*, the mark could not be awarded. The comparison required on **Question 40** was, this year, well done, partly due to the way in which the question was laid out. On **Question 41**, the required concept was a future trip to America.

Answers which suggested that the trip had already taken place could not be rewarded. Finally, (pleasingly) successful on **Question 42**, conveying Léa's wish to work in international relations.



FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

Candidates seem to have had plenty of time for this paper: almost all candidates made some attempt at **Section 3**, even if only to tick the *Vrai/Faux* boxes, and most tried to answer at least some of the questions from the last exercise. Handwriting and presentation were generally good. Those who finish their paper in good time could be encouraged to spend some time checking over their work, and eliminating any obvious errors, for instance in words copied from the text itself.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

This exercise clearly contained some vocabulary items which were unfamiliar to a number of candidates: **Questions 1** and **4** were generally correctly answered, but for **Question 2**, *guichet* did not appear to be known and the question was often answered with D rather than A. For **Question 3**, parts of the body did not seem to be as well-known as expected and the answer to **Question 5** was frequently given as A, instead of the correct D (*feux*).

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

Most candidates scored very well on this exercise, the only doubt was occasionally over **Questions 7** and **8** where some candidates failed to equate *calme* and lack of noise, and where they were unsure of the whereabouts of the shops – perhaps the word *Là...* caused some confusion.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

This exercise was often very well done, though some candidates inverted their answers to **Questions 11** (*passeport*) and **15** (*argent*), and **Questions 13** (*valise*) and **14** (*maillot de bain*). For **Question 14**, a number of candidates gave F as their answer, instead of C.

Exercise 4 Question 16

Here, candidates were asked to write a message to their French friend, giving three pieces of information:

- (a) who they were meeting
- (b) where they were going, and
- (c) how they were going to travel.

Examiners accepted references to meeting up with any people, whether friends or relations, and most candidates opted for *amis*. There were a number of interesting attempts at *piscine*, most of which were understandable, though some candidates chose to say that they were going to the beach or a hotel – these were credited as long as candidates incorporated some version of *nager* into their answer. The last task was often misunderstood, and instead of simply saying they were going by bicycle, some candidates recounted that they were then going to buy a bicycle, or simply said that they liked riding a bicycle. As for language, many candidates found themselves in difficulties trying to turn *rendez-vous* into a verb, offering variations on *rendre/render*, and thereby failing to score the first communication mark. Most had no problems with the second task, and for the last task, *bicyclette* and *vélo* were accepted with any preposition, as was *faire du cyclisme*, but there was much use of *bicycle*, *bici*, and *cycle*, which were not rewarded.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-25

In this exercise, Examiners are looking for answers which show that candidates have understood the passage and been able to locate the correct piece of text which contains the answer needed. Examiners are prepared to accept direct lifts and a variety of personal pronoun and adjective use, provided that these do not confuse the reader or render the answer ambiguous.

The first question was generally correctly answered, though some candidates interpreted *depuis dix ans* in the text as meaning from the age of 10, and therefore did not score. **Question 18** was also usually correctly answered with *école*, though a few chose *lycée* or *collège* – neither of these answers was credited. **Question 19** presented a little more difficulty – the answer looked for was that *Amanda passe chercher Diane* rather than just that the girls walked to school together. **Questions 20** and **21** could be answered by lifting directly from the text, and most candidates scored the three available marks. For the answer to **Question 22**, it had to be clear that *Amanda bavarde tout le temps* – some candidates did not make this clear, and some said that it was Diane who talked all the time. **Question 23** was answered very well, and **Question 24** was generally answered correctly, though some candidates did not understand the use of *de vieux*, and some candidates told us what Diane's favourite activities were, rather than what Amanda thought about them. The last question was also answered well, for the main part, though some candidates failed to make clear that it was Diane of whom Amanda made fun.

Exercise 2 Question 26

For this question, candidates were asked to write between 80 and 90 words on their favourite day of the year. There were three required elements:

- (a) with whom they spend the day;
- (b) what they do on the day itself;
- (c) why they particularly like their chosen day.

Most candidates opted for Christmas, their birthday, Diwali, or the last day of the school year/the first day of the holidays, and mostly wrote in the present tense. Some opted for a particular day in the last year and recounted the events of that day, which offered possibilities of using a range of tenses. This topic was well within the scope of most candidates who could score communication points with some ease, though a few failed to include enough information e.g. some candidates failed to make any response to the third task, and some merely repeated the same points for (b) and (c). It was refreshing to read that many candidates enjoyed spending the day with their parents and other members of their families! Weaker answers tended to be very repetitive, with lists of activities and food items, or statements that the candidate liked the day very much, without managing to give any reasons why, or repeating the same reason several times. Good answers were characterised by the use of clear, accurate language, varied details and a range of structures, with many candidates scoring in the top two bands for accuracy. In general, accuracy was rather variable – candidates were often unable to use the verb *recevoir* correctly, and there were many mis-spellings of *amis*, *copains*, *cadeaux* and *gâteaux*.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

Once again, there were some candidates who ticked the *Vrai/Faux* boxes, but made no attempt to write any justifications. Some candidates wrote a justification for each statement, whether they had decided it was *Vrai* or *Faux*. Candidates need to be aware that if they decide the correct answer is *Vrai*, and tick that box, then they do not need to write anything, and that even if they do write a justification/correction, there are no further marks available.

In this section, Examiners are concerned not only that candidates show their comprehension by locating the relevant areas of the text, but that they show their understanding by selecting exactly the details required to answer the question, and manipulate the language accordingly.

Candidates generally scored quite well on this exercise: four of the questions provided few problems. The first question seemed to cause some difficulties, perhaps because candidates were unsure about the

meaning of *déménager*. The idea needed in the answer was simply that of a visit to Paris, and details were not credited, for example the lift of the sentence *le jour de ses 15 ans son père lui a offert un billet de train pour aller visiter la capitale*. **Question 28** needed only the information that Elisa was accompanied by her mother for her first photos, so candidates who lifted *Elle refuse. Mais un an plus tard, elle a pris pour ses premières photos et cette fois, sa mère l'accompagne* invalidated their answers by the addition of extraneous material. **Questions 29** and **30** were both *Vrai*, but a number of candidates had not seen the connection between *écrire un livre* and *devenir écrivain*, and concluded that **Question 30** was false because Elisa had decided to buy a farm. **Question 31** was very straightforward but required the reinforcement that *elle pense que la publicité est absurde*. **Question 32** was generally correctly identified as *Faux* and corrected appropriately.

Exercise 2 Questions 33-41

For this exercise, too, candidates need not only to be able to identify the correct part of the text for their answer but also to be selective about exactly what details they choose to use as their response. It was often the case that, where candidates indiscriminately copied a section of text which did contain the correct answer, the extra details they gave rendered their answer invalid.

Question 33 was straightforward, but some candidates showed that they had not really understood what was being asked by seizing on the first number they came to in the text, and giving as their answer *dix adolescents*. **Question 34** needed the details given in the last sentence of the first paragraph, though many thought that the answer lay in the sentence before. To answer **Question 35**, candidates had to have understood what, exactly, the adolescents needed – according to Philippe, *d'oublier les journées passées dans les hôpitaux* or *d'oublier la maladie/les souffrances...* and according to Jacques, put most simply, *la confiance*. Those who began their answer with *redonner à ces adolescents...* invalidated their response, as it was clear that they were not answering about the needs of the adolescents, but rather about how Jacques sees his own role in the enterprise. **Question 36** required only the information that candidates needed to earn the money for the trip – the information about *un petit boulot* was irrelevant. **Questions 37, 38** and **39** were successfully answered by large numbers of candidates and **Question 40** required only the answer of *joie* or *joyeux* though many candidates lifted the last sentence of the penultimate paragraph as their answer. For the very last question, Examiners accepted a number of possible answers for what Adrien had learnt from the experience – *prendre des décisions/faire des choses tout seul/réussir (des projets difficiles)/ne pas avoir peur...* and some candidates were able to express one or more of these ideas, but some were too reluctant to select from the text and ended up either with a direct quote, which was not rewarded, or with an over-complex attempt which contained too many inaccuracies to score.

RENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/03

Speaking

General comments

This Paper was common to all candidates, whether they had followed a Core Curriculum or an Extended Curriculum course. The full range of marks was available to all candidates and, as in previous years, a wide range of performance was heard by Moderators.

Overall, the standard of work produced by candidates was very similar to that produced last year, with many examples of very good work from candidates of all abilities. The best work came from Centres in which it was clear that oral work had been practised on a **regular** basis and had been a central learning activity. In most Centres, conduct of the Speaking test was correct and professional: examining was sympathetic to candidates and questioning pitched sensibly, according to the ability of the candidates. It was clear that candidates in these Centres had been prepared appropriately and the test gave them the chance to show they could communicate in everyday situations and discuss a **good** variety of topics. The best examining gave candidates the opportunity to work in a variety of tenses in both conversation sections and invited candidates to respond in a **spontaneous** way. It was particularly pleasing to hear some skilful, patient examining of weaker candidates in which questions were adjusted to a suitable level.

It is regrettable, however, to report that, despite examples of very good examining in some Centres, there were an increasing number of Centres where candidates were disadvantaged by poor examining technique. In such cases, Examiners were often unfamiliar with the test requirements and the mark scheme. It is particularly important that Examiners prepare Role plays carefully, that they keep to the 'script' and give candidates the opportunity to attempt all the stipulated tasks and to work for the marks. Examiners sometimes pre-empted candidates by completing the tasks for them, thus denying them the opportunity to score the available marks. Examiners need to be particularly careful not to offer candidates vocabulary items or options in the Role plays, unless these appear in the Teachers' Notes booklet. In some cases, conversation sections were either brief or omitted, affecting candidates' scores: marks cannot be awarded for missing sections of the examination. Centres are reminded that, in the conversation sections, marks of more than 6 cannot be awarded for language unless the candidate shows s/he is able to convey past and future meaning. Furthermore, it is essential that candidates are asked more than 2 or 3 questions in the General conversation section. Centres are advised to seek clarification from CIE if they are uncertain about any part of the instructions.

Moderators also reported an increase in clerical errors this year. Centres are reminded that they are responsible for the correct addition and transcription of all marks.

Duration of tests

Most Centres adhered well to timings but a few Centres submitted tests that were either very short or too long. The maximum test time should be approximately 15 minutes: 5 minutes for the two Role plays, 5 minutes for the Topic Presentation & Conversation and a further 5 minutes for the General Conversation. Where Role plays take less than 5 minutes, as is often the case with good candidates, it is unnecessary to extend the conversation sections past their allotted 5 minutes each in order to compensate.

Quality of recording

It is the Centre's responsibility to test all equipment prior to the Speaking tests to ensure it is in good working order and to position microphones (preferably external) to favour the candidate. It is also the Centre's responsibility to check the quality of the recording before submitting the materials for moderation and to contact CIE immediately if there is a problem. It is unacceptable for Centres to simply submit a sample on which the sound quality is so poor as to make External Moderation impossible. The best quality recordings were digital, but perfectly satisfactory quality can be obtained on a cassette. If digital recording systems are used, all tests must be saved in standard audio format (MP3), as otherwise Moderators may not have the

technology to access the recordings. Whichever method is used, it is crucial that all tapes/CDs are clearly labelled with the correct names and numbers, in order of appearance. Each candidate on the sample must be clearly introduced by the Examiner; candidates must not be allowed to announce themselves.

Sample size and range

Centres are reminded that the correct sample size is six recordings to cover the full range of marks: ideally the sample should include the top and bottom-scoring candidates at the Centre with the remainder of the candidates in the sample distributed evenly between these two points.

If a Centre wishes to use more than one Examiner to conduct the Speaking tests for its candidates, permission must be sought from CIE before the start of the Speaking test period. A standard sample of six candidates (total), covering all Examiners, should be submitted. Details of Internal Moderation procedures must be enclosed with the materials for External Moderation. This is in order to satisfy Moderators that the Centre has taken all possible steps to ensure that all candidates have received the same treatment irrespective of which Examiner conducted their Speaking test.

Application of the Mark Scheme

Most Examiners applied the scheme correctly and consistently and in such cases adjustments to marks were small or unnecessary. This year, however, there were more cases of Centres requiring large downward adjustment to marks in order to bring marks in line with the agreed standard.

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.

Role Plays A

As in 2008, 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 the B Role plays and are set using vocabulary and topics from the Defined Content (Areas A, B and C). Candidates generally found them to be accessible and even weaker candidates were able to score at least one mark on each task. Centres are reminded that on some tasks a short response may be sufficient to attract a mark of 3.

At the tourist office

Candidates coped well with this Role play. It was not necessary to use a verb to complete Task 3: candidates who chose to use a verb sometimes mis-conjugated it. It was pleasing to hear most candidates asking an appropriate question on the last task.

At the restaurant

Candidates, again, usually made a good attempt at this Role play set in a familiar context. Candidates should be reminded that where the task is to listen to the Examiner and choose one of the options offered, they should follow this instruction. Some Examiners failed to prompt candidates on the last task.

At the baker's

Again, candidates usually attempted this Role play well, but some of the weaker performances failed to take account of the rubric, which explained the cake was a birthday cake for a friend. Tasks 3 and 4 were well attempted but the hardest task proved to be giving the age of the friend. Weaker candidates frequently gave their own age or used *être* instead of *avoir*.

Role Plays B

The B Role plays were more demanding in that they required the ability to use different tenses and to explain and to react as appropriate. These Role plays differentiated well across the candidature, but where

examining was sympathetic and Examiners were familiar with the testing points, even candidates were able to score some marks.

Asking a French parent for permission to go out

A few candidates misunderstood the rubric and said they wanted to go abroad to spend a week in France. Tasks 2 and 3 were generally well done, but only the stronger candidates were accurate in saying how they intended to return and at what time. On the last task, most opted for phoning the parent should a problem arise.

Phoning a coach company

Most were able to convey that they had left an object in the coach but in Task 2, faulty verb manipulation often limited the mark to 2. Most made a good attempt at describing the object and saying how they could be contacted, but only a few candidates could say why it was important to retrieve the object. Some forgot to express thanks; candidates should be reminded that they should attempt all parts of tasks, including greetings, farewells and thanks.

Phoning a hotel for a job

Task 1 was attempted well, but on Task 2 only the best candidates could say where they had seen the advert (any plausible location was accepted) and many left out the request for dates. A few Examiners did prompt well on this. Some candidates stated they had no experience of hotel work, despite a clear cue to the contrary. The last task was well done.

Topic Presentation & Conversation

A good range of topics was heard in Centres and many candidates had prepared their chosen topics thoroughly. As in 2008, there were many accounts of life in other countries, trips, sport, leisure activities and school life: it was encouraging to hear the aspirations of many of these candidates. Centres are reminded that they should try to ensure that candidates do not present 'myself' as their topic as, if they do, this can severely restrict the possibilities for General conversation.

The conduct of this section of the Speaking test was generally correct, and the best examining offered candidates the opportunity to convey past and future meaning, opinions and explanations in a spontaneous way. At the top end of the range of performance, Moderators were impressed by fluent and confident conversation which featured accurate work with a pleasing use of complex structures.

Regrettably, some Examiners disadvantaged candidates by allowing their initial Topic presentation to last longer than the stipulated 1-2 minutes and by not asking enough open questions, in the ensuing discussion of the Topic, to extend candidates sufficiently. In some cases, questions merely elicited information already offered by the candidate in the Topic presentation. Even more regrettably, some Centres missed out part or all of this section of the Speaking test, which should last for about 5 minutes in total. Centres are reminded that marks cannot be awarded for sections of the Speaking test that are omitted.

It was helpful to both Moderators and candidates when Examiners indicated the end of this section.

General Conversation

Again, Centres generally understood the need for breadth of topic coverage and usually covered a good range of topics in the General conversation. A wide range of performance was heard with the best performances being heard in Centres in which it was clear that oral work was a regular learning activity. In such Centres, both Examiners and candidates were at ease and it was pleasing to hear genuine and interesting exchanges.

In some Centres, questions requiring brief answers predominated with very few unexpected or open-ended questions. Examiners are reminded that for better candidates to score well, questions should be more probing and allow candidates to show the ability to justify opinions and use more complex structures. It is important to ask questions of an open type, such as 'tell me about...' in order to give more able candidates the opportunity to develop their answers sufficiently. As in the Topic Presentation & Conversation, opportunities to convey past and future meaning must be given to candidates.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/04
Continuous Writing

General comments

Examiners, as usual, commend the enthusiasm and knowledge of French which were displayed on many scripts. The better candidates were able to convey a wide and varied range of meanings in response to the rubric, including views on friends and friendship, a description of school holidays and relating an exchange of roles with the Head Teacher. Average candidates tended to score quite highly in **Questions 1(a)** and **1(b)** when the present was the main tense and the subject matter was familiar, but fared less well when required to tell a story in past tenses. Weaker candidates usually were able to answer parts of **Question 1** adequately but found the challenges of **Question 2** to be demanding. Advice for such candidates is included later in this Report.

The majority of candidates adhered to the tasks set out in the rubric and scored well for communication. If any of the tasks were not attempted there was an automatic loss of marks for communication.

In general, candidates made sensible use of the time allowed. Nearly all attempted both questions and there was little incidence of excessively long answers. Candidates are advised that any material in excess of 140 words is not rewarded either for communication or for language. There should be adequate time to revise their work. It was a shame so many did not seem to do so as there were careless errors on many scripts which might well have been eliminated by careful, systematic checking. The presentation of most scripts was acceptable, but the hand writing of a significant minority was barely legible and there was much untidy work. Examiners try to give the benefit of the doubt, but when letters are so badly formed as to lead to ambiguity, marks for language will inevitably be lost.

Question 1

(a) The importance of friends

This question attracted a large number of answers, particularly from girls.

The description of the 'best friend' seemed to be a familiar task, and candidates usually offered copious details including their friends' age and nationality, the colour of their eyes and hair, how tall they were, their interests and hobbies and their personality. Most were able to score quite heavily for language here, but some had difficulty with adjectival agreements and the spelling of such everyday words as *cheveux* and *yeux*. The gender of the friend was sometimes in doubt when candidates began *Mon meilleur amie*, which smacks of carelessness. The friend was described as *aimable* (frequently rendered as 'amiable'), *généreux*, *sympa* and *drôle*. In some cases, the description occupied a disproportionately large amount of the answer to the detriment of what followed, but candidates were happy to be on familiar ground. There were relatively few verbal errors, as the required tense was the present and the usual verbs were those of everyday, such as *être*, *avoir*, *s'appeler*, *jouer*, *écouter*, *aller*, *faire* and *aimer*.

Credit was given for stating that friends were important. There was no penalty for those who, continuing from the previous task of describing a best friend, wrote about the importance of that particular friend and not friends in general. Friends were valued as confidants and companions. They offered help and advice in times of trouble. Many helped with homework. Grammatical limitations were evident in some attempts to render this concept, as in *elle aide moi* and *je parle à elle*. The verb *comprendre* (to understand) was often employed, but was not always known properly, as was evident in such attempts as *elle me compris*. Some candidates, possibly in boarding schools, said their friends took on the roles of absent brothers and sisters. Often friends were good for one's morale and they made you laugh. Better candidates were able to express some interesting ideas on the importance of friends and weaker ones were usually able to say something relevant, even if in simple language.

Activities shared with friends varied widely but the most popular areas included sport (mostly boys) and socialising (mostly girls). Verbs were usually well handled as the present tense was used in the response to *Que faites-vous ensemble?* Most were able to acquire a communication mark for *nous jouons au tennis/foot/hockey, nous faisons de la natation/l'équitation/du shopping* or the equivalent. The use of *on* for *nous* was accepted. Again, the verbs and the vocabulary were familiar and should have presented few difficulties.

In the last task, most seemed to understand they had to say how they would like to celebrate the end of exams but not all were able to express their answers coherently. Many candidates quite properly used *j'aimerais* with an infinitive in response to *dites ce que vous aimeriez faire* but the future tense was accepted also in expressions such as *après les examens nous irons en ville* or *nous passerons le week-end au bord de la mer*. Many candidates, however, struggled to find a correct future or conditional tense.

(b) Holidays

Candidates answered this option in roughly equal numbers to those who chose **1(a)**.

Most recognised that they should say what they usually do in the holidays and used present tenses. A minority mistakenly wrote about what they did in the last holiday and communication marks were lost. Candidates should remember to read the rubric carefully.

Many said they spent holidays at home. Boarding school candidates enjoyed the chance to spend time with the family and friends. They played with brothers and sisters, helped mother around the house, went on outings and played on the computer. Some spent time shopping or going to discos. Others went on long journeys, sometimes to see distant relations or to accompany parents on a trip. There was a wealth of opportunity to say things about their own lives and most were able to offer plenty of material in present tenses and relatively simple language. As with **Question 1(a)**, some went to great length to respond to this first element and gave only cursory comments on subsequent tasks.

Some candidates were able to say they liked or disliked the above activities but neglected to say why. Reasons did not have to be complicated. Straightforward statements such as: *j'aime jouer au tennis parce que je peux rencontrer mes amis* or *j'adore faire des promenades avec mes amis car ce n'est pas possible pendant l'année scolaire* scored two communication marks. Holiday activities candidates particularly liked included swimming, playing games, spending time in the country or by the sea or simply relaxing at home to recover from the stress of school life. Some referred to activities they disliked such as visiting boring relatives or doing school work.

Ideal holidays tended to be imagined in exotic settings such as tropical islands or in exciting cities such as Paris or New York. As in **Question 1(a)** the verb *aimer* in a conditional tense was appropriate (*j'aimerais passer mes vacances idéales aux Etats-Unis*) but candidates found alternative ways of expressing the idea. The reasons were expressed by statements such as *on pourrait se baigner dans la mer* or *je pourrais apprendre à faire du ski*. This final task was well handled by many candidates but sadly some had already exceeded the word limit and failed to score the allocated communication mark.

Question 2

Exchanging places with your Head Teacher

Most candidates seem to encounter greater difficulty when faced with creating a narrative using past tenses as **Question 2** requires and this year was no exception. However, some interesting work was presented. More successful candidates approached the question by relating the course of this unusual school day, event by event, and stuck to the requirements of the rubric. They included the reactions of their classmates and ended with their own personal views of the experience.

Copying out the stimulus *Ce jour-là... to ...mon école* was not included in the word count and gained no credit. Some began by explaining how the role reversal came about. Some were rewarded for good work and behaviour in school. Others were being punished or were being taught through their own experience how difficult the role of a Head Teacher really is. Others said the Head was ill or indisposed and they had to

step into the breach. Others won the 'day' in a competition. Others dreamed the whole day which frequently turned into a nightmare.

The usual approach was to tell how the day began, often with the narrator conducting the school assembly. Pupils and staff were shocked and amazed. Those who were not sure of the French to express these concepts should have played safe by saying something else. Many 'invented' words like *shocké* or *suprise* (sic). Failure to make agreements of adjectives with plural nouns was common. The 'day' often followed a course of events which candidates assumed constituted a typical working day for a Head. They visited lessons. They held staff meetings. They patrolled the premises. They wrote letters and worked in their office. (Surprisingly few candidates knew the word *bureau*.) They punished naughty children. (Many attempted to say that they gave detentions, but very few knew the word *retenue*.) These relatively straightforward events could be expressed in clear and accurate French, within the compass of candidates of average ability. The quality of language declined, however, when over ambitious candidates attempted to say how they tried to improve the running of the school. Only the most able could do this satisfactorily. Some had a *laissez-faire* approach to running the school and abolished homework for the day or extended recreation periods. Others went all the way and suspended lessons which were replaced by sports competitions. Uniform was to be improved or made non compulsory. The canteen was to serve only dishes candidates liked, such as fast food. The narrator often curried favour with his/her peers by giving out sweets to all. Some interesting ideas were touched on by those who attempted to express the dilemma of exercising discipline while not upsetting one's friends. Classmates' reactions varied widely. In some cases they were delighted to have an ally in a place of authority. In others the role reversal created petty envy on the part of other pupils who were jealous of their 'acting Head'. In many cases the day ended in chaos as the pupils, released from normal discipline ran riot, to the dismay of the wretched narrator. Much of the above was attempted by candidates of only modest ability in French and the quality of language suffered. A more conservative approach would surely have paid dividends for them.

The views of the narrator sometimes fell outside the 140 word count so a communication mark was lost. The comments were very mixed. Some were proud of what they achieved and hoped to be a Head Teacher one day. More often they felt stressed and over worked. They had thought the work would be easy but it was in fact very onerous. Coping with rowdy children was beyond them. It was a great relief when the real Head resumed work. It was a pity so few mentioned the Head taking on the role of a candidate, as an opportunity to contrast the experiences of each party was missed.

The best candidates had obvious fun telling their stories which often contained humour and amusing anecdotes. As stated above, those with more limited capacities would be well advised to simplify their stories in line with their own competence. It was a shame that many who had scored quite well for a straightforward, accurate piece of writing in **Question 1** wrote an answer to **Question 2** which contained multiple errors of language, many of which seemed to be due to carelessness or panic. The perfect tense was often badly constructed or confused with the imperfect or even the present. Everyday words were incorrectly spelled, such as *beaucoup*, *étudiants* and *professeur*. Common verbs were confused such as *écouter* and *entendre*, *parler* and *dire*. The gender of the *amis* varied erratically. Even the possessive adjective in *mes amis de classe* was rendered as *mon* or sometimes *vos*, which suggests that the attention to detail, which had perhaps been evident in **Question 1**, had been lost. The advice to candidates of modest ability would be to keep to simple statements in the required tense, to compose each statement with care employing constructions and vocabulary they are sure of and to try to eliminate inaccuracies by revising their work thoroughly.