

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1120/01 Writing

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure they identify the key words in each task in order to satisfy the requirements of the question. This is particularly important in **Section 1**, especially when the word **and**, in bold type, indicates there are two parts to the bullet point.
- Candidates are advised not to exceed the maximum number of words in **Section 2**. Doing so rarely improves the writing.
- Candidates should ensure that tenses are consistent.
- The inclusion of extreme violence and/or sexual content is not appropriate.
- In **Section 1**, candidates should not lift sections of the scenario as an opening paragraph.
- Careless handwriting can often make full stops look like commas and suggest a lack of proper sentence separation.

General comments

In a year which saw a global pandemic, centres must be congratulated on preparing candidates for this examination. Similarly, candidates are to be admired for completing the examination with no obvious change in the quality of the work. There were very few short or irrelevant responses and the very best candidates in this exam continue to demonstrate great fluency and accuracy. Vocabulary continues to be very impressive, with a better use of connectives such as *Hence*, *Moreover* and *Furthermore* this year. Tenses and agreement are the main weaknesses in accuracy for many. **Section 1** was done well by a large majority with responses being well structured. Some candidates need to be clear about the text type required as it will not be a letter every year. In **Section 2**, the argument essay was more popular this year but these essays should only be attempted by candidates who can argue in detail. Sentence separation errors still give cause for concern with weaker candidates, as does the use of text speak.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1 – Directed Writing

In **Section 1**, at the request of the Principal, candidates had to write a magazine article about making their school more environmentally friendly. This **purpose** and **situation** proved to be straightforward for the majority of candidates. A successful answer had to include the following information:

- what the school already did to help the environment;
- details of the candidate's idea **and** how other students could help;
- how the whole school would benefit from the idea.

There were several different approaches adopted by candidates to the idea of being *environmentally friendly*. Most spoke about how the school did and could remain *green* and *eco-friendly*. Others spoke about making the physical environment of the school *friendly* in the sense of *pleasant*. Third, some candidates referred to the environment of the school in a non-physical way and spoke about the school having anti-bullying and other policies to ensure that the school was an *emotionally* friendly environment. It must be stressed that all three interpretations, or indeed a mixture of them, were valid and all three allowed the candidates to complete the task fully and successfully.

For bullet point 1, it was necessary to outline the successful ways in which the school had already been made environmentally friendly. Most candidates were clear that their schools had provided litter bins, cut down on the use of paper, painted their surroundings and implemented some policies aimed at producing greater co-operation between staff and students. Much was made by many candidates of the *Reduce, Reuse, Recycle* policy already seen in many schools.

Where candidates failed to gain full credit for this bullet point it was because they failed to give specific examples and simply relied on saying that the school had always done its best to protect the environment.

For bullet point 2, candidates had to suggest a new idea that would build on what was already being done by the school and say how fellow students could be involved. This could be a completely new idea or something which extended an existing idea. Candidates were keen to target the use of plastic within the school, usually in the form of canteen cutlery. There were schemes, such as pupils bringing their own metal cutlery or providing their own lunch boxes to reduce the use of plastic. Other schemes involved clearing beaches of plastic, installing recycling bins dedicated to different kinds of waste, refurbishing the school premises to make them more people friendly and adopting policies which would bring staff and pupils closer together. Many candidates suggested planting trees and flowers in the school grounds, doing deep cleans of the school, and cycling to school to cut down on pollution. Some of the ideas were extremely ambitious and often involved solar panels. Most candidates performed well on the Task Fulfilment criteria with respect to bullet point 2 because they did both parts of the bullet point; students were asked to help with planting, cleaning, fundraising and making relevant posters.

A number of candidates made this paragraph too long and jeopardised their chances in subsequent bullet points; some candidates merely listed far too many ideas and would have been better off supplying greater detail for fewer ideas.

Weaker candidates found it difficult to suggest anything new and fell back on repeating what had been said in bullet point 1, but with a little more detail so that they recommended *more bins* and so on. There was also a tendency amongst weaker candidates to turn this bullet, as well as bullet point 1, into an overlong narrative, typically one involving cleaning local beaches and tourist sites.

Bullet point 3 required the candidates to say exactly how the school would benefit from the new idea, not how it already benefited from the existing situation. It had to be the school which benefited but, in this context, *school* could mean the school itself or the staff and students. The most successful candidates were able to see many school benefits and link them to the wider picture. So, the increased recycling in the school helped the world in general and some could see the possibility of selling the recycled waste to add to the school's finances. Further benefits included a more conducive environment for study, happier students and greater co-operation with staff. Most candidates saw their school benefiting from an enhanced reputation which in turn would lead to greater recruitment of staff and students.

The weakest candidates said little that was specific and relied on expressions such as *if these ideas are implemented, then the school and students will benefit* but they never quite said how. Some, unfortunately, neglected to mention that the school itself benefited at all but concentrated simply on the general benefits for the wider environment.

Balance is required in selecting material for Task Fulfilment and it usually pays to keep the bullet points fairly equal in length. Also, it does not help to add overlong introductory and concluding paragraphs. In the case of this question, a number of candidates used overlong introductory paragraphs about the state of pollution in the world, whereas the emphasis in the task as a whole should have been on the school.

Candidates who were clear about the other requirements for Task Fulfilment produced appropriate and convincing magazine articles. The *purpose, situation* and *audience* were well within the grasp and experience of the vast majority of candidates, although direct addresses to fellow students could have helped a lot in making the audience even more clear. The *tone* in the articles was generally appropriate. *Opinion* and *justification* arose naturally when bullet points 2 and 3 were answered. If there was a general weakness in Task Fulfilment this year, it was that relatively few candidates coped very well with the *format* of a magazine article. Most candidates did include a magazine article title. These ranged from the appropriate and snappy *Go Green* to merely copying part of the rubric. There were some minor attempts to include a sense of speaking to their peers with the use of question and exclamation sentences when they asked for help – *Come on, school! We've got this!* – but, in truth, the majority of the responses could just as easily have been textbooks or letters. In fact, a number of candidates did write the article as a letter with a letter format.

Linguistically, candidates needed to remember that they were speaking to a school-based audience. Better candidates were able to sound convincing and employed a mix of formal and informal expression, without descending to slang or text speak. Candidates demonstrated their knowledge of this topic with words such as *campaign*, *biodegradable*, and *initiative* being used regularly. Overall, spelling was satisfactory, although a very common error here was to misspell *environment*, even though it was in the question. Many candidates could improve their accuracy by using capital letters properly, ensuring correct verbs and tenses and avoiding omitting articles.

Section 2 – Composition

Question 2

**Describe what the place where you live is like in the early morning and in the early evening.
(Remember you are describing the atmosphere, the activities and any people as well as the place.)**

The descriptive title this year was more popular than in previous years, and was attempted by a wider range of candidates than is normally the case. A description of their area was something most could write about in some detail. Most candidates were also helped by structuring their responses in two contrasting halves, speaking both about morning and evening. There were also some interesting and unusual approaches: one candidate wrote from the perspective of a cat. While most wrote about their outdoor surroundings, many recreated the world inside their houses. The very best responses employed the full range of senses to give accounts of their surroundings and were better this year at creating the atmosphere of the place they knew very well. One candidate wrote about the sun *melting into the sky as the darkness of the evening overpowers the sun*. Some very powerful images were employed to good effect – children going to school *like a group of white doves*. Another mentioned *the tinkling of the cat's collar* while yet another spoke of a family argument from the morning disappearing by the evening *like sweat evaporating from skin*. Vocabulary was often very impressive.

Less able candidates relied too much on narrative, turning the title into a story, while others used rather general or clichéd language, such as *birds chirping* and *the sun's rays blazing*. It never helps merely to list aspects of the location rather than describe them and on repeating the words *beautiful*, *happy*, *colourful*, *amazing* and *environment*. The control of tenses was often a weakness in this composition. The present tense was used well by most but others fell into and out of the past tense, seemingly without reason.

Question 3

'In the future, schools will not exist and all education will be done online at home.' Would this be a good thing? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

This title was a popular one. The question was made all the more relevant by the events of 2020 and candidates having had a great deal of experience of online learning. It had an initial attraction for most because candidates enjoyed the chance to get up later, dress more casually and not have to face the difficulty of travel to school. There were also attractions in being able to look up information quickly on the internet to help with studies. However, the vast majority of candidates preferred the idea of face to face education in schools because most believed that school was about socialization as well as academic work. Furthermore, some candidates missed the sporting facilities at school and the chance to spend time with friends and be outdoors. Also, the more time candidates spent at home, the more they saw the negative side of online learning at home. They became aware of the cost of technology and the internet, something not everyone could afford. They saw the possibility of abusing the system and the dangers of laziness and falling standards when they were not closely supervised. Many complained of distractions caused by younger siblings and one candidate even complained of being asked to do more chores when at home. Stronger responses had a clear structure, contrasting both sides of the argument, while weaker ones were disorganized and somewhat rambling and repetitive.

Question 4

'People are influenced more by their friends than by their families.' Do you think this is true? Give reasons and examples to support your view.

This argument essay was not a very popular choice and was answered by relatively few candidates. The great majority of those who did tackle this question were clear that friends were far more influential than families. They were adamant that, as teenagers, they spent far more time now with friends than they did with their families and so this was inevitable. The most often quoted example was that when choosing clothes to

buy, they would always ask friends rather than family. As always, candidates who choose the argument essay should ensure they have enough to say. There were a few impressive and mature arguments made by candidates who saw that friends can also be a bad influence as well as an influence for good. One particularly mature response argued that the influence of family was always stronger because it had been so fundamental in unacknowledged ways and had in fact led to the choice of friends in the teenage years.

Question 5

Write a story which includes the sentence: ‘It was easy to see why everyone wanted to meet him.’

This was the most popular choice in **Section 2**. This was an accessible sentence to use and many candidates clearly enjoyed this topic. Almost all candidates found the given sentence was very easy to integrate convincingly into the narrative without changing the wording. The great strength of the writing responses to this question was the sensible structure employed by most. The centre of attraction was usually a well-known celebrity or sportsperson and most of the responses followed a similar pattern of the celebrity or sportsperson always having been a favourite of the writer. They were then praised for their talent and personality and quite by chance eventually met the writer in happy circumstances, usually at a concert or a game, where the writer managed to get an autograph or some other souvenir. In other responses, the story involved a handsome or beautiful new student in the school; the new student often became the boyfriend or girlfriend of the writer after initially seeming to favour others. Most of these stories were optimistic in outlook and led to some strong characterisation through the use of convincing dialogue. Used sparingly, and properly punctuated, speech can be highly effective. Some candidates overused the dialogue which prevented them from showing a full range of vocabulary.

Not all of the stories ended well. Some of the characters were a great disappointment when met in person. Some narrators felt overwhelmed in the company of the central character – *there were more people in the living room than at a zoo*. Whether the story turned out well or not, a straightforward narrative was sometimes lifted by an insight on the part of the narrator and by excellent vocabulary, as in one clever, witty and compassionate story of a *youthful, carefree and a perfect student persona* who as well as being rich and privileged was depressed and insecure – *Everyone met, but I was the first to meet his true self, while everyone else was absorbed in their narcissistic selves*.

There were a few examples in these responses of either unnecessary aggression or detailed sexual content and it is worth emphasising that neither is appropriate.

Question 6

Write a story about a person with a hidden talent.

This was another popular choice. Most of the stories were *rags to riches* narratives and there were many intriguing hidden talents. One typical story involved the *bad boy* of the class who *would rather be having a nap or watching people fighting on his phone* but who discovered he could sing beautifully. Another typical storyline involved *the real loner and introvert*, who *loathed* talking to anyone but was entered by his classmates for a public speaking contest as a joke. Up on stage, after having *escaped all the practices*, all his shyness disappeared and he delivered his speech *nonchalantly* as if it had been rehearsed. Another vivid story was about a very shy boy who learned to play the piano and who stunned his audiences, winning numerous awards – *His hidden talent took him far beyond his expectations*. This was among a number of pieces about underdogs, which seemed to be a thread running through many stories.

Weaker responses included routine, predictable stories, often characterised by a lack of variation in sentence types and simple vocabulary. The best responses contained sentence types and length of great variety with excellent vocabulary and punctuation. Paragraphing which helps the reader was also a characteristic of the better work.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1120/02 Reading

Key messages

- Candidates are advised to read both the texts and the questions very carefully to ensure the material is fully understood. Each question directs them to the paragraph or area of the text where they will find the relevant material on which to base their answer.
- Candidates are advised for **Question 1(a)** and **Question 1(b)** to focus on identifying, specifically, the main overarching points from the text without the unnecessary inclusion of examples, repetition and extensions of those points. The inclusion of such irrelevant details in **Question 1(a)** was often transferred to **Question (b)** affecting the quality of the response here.
- Candidates do not have to use their own words in **Question 1(a)**; however, they ought to be aware that when substituting a word or phrase, it must be appropriate. While candidates need to be encouraged to avoid copying lengthy sentences, they must also be aware that brevity can exclude key information.
- For **Question 1(b)**, candidates have clearly been taught the importance of linking devices to establish coherence, but it is essential that these are appropriate and also used selectively. Candidates are advised to consider the meaning of linking devices as there is sometimes inappropriate use of, for example, 'therefore' when there is no causal link between sentences. While 'firstly' can be a useful starting point, it is less effective to continue with 'Secondly' etc. Candidates should also be careful that 'lastly' is indeed the final point to be made. Another piece of advice to candidates could be to avoid the over-use of any linking device, especially 'and' or 'also'. Words and phrases which are not standard English, such as 'to add on', are best avoided. Many candidates would benefit from further practice using these devices in their summaries.
- Although punctuation is not being assessed in **Question 1(b)**, candidates should be aware that accurate punctuation can assist in the fluent and coherent presentation of content points. Coherence was sometimes impeded by the use of commas instead of full stops. Occasionally, there were whole stretches of sentences run together with no punctuation, requiring a re-reading to make sense of what had been written.
- Candidates are encouraged to write to the recommended length in **Question 1(b)**; overlong or short responses are self-penalising since they can not satisfactorily fulfil the criteria for Relevance or Coherence.
- In the multiple-choice vocabulary question, candidates should be encouraged to try out each of the possible words and decide which is the most appropriate in the passage with which they are dealing. This multiple-choice question is not a test of literal comprehension but an inferential test of deducing meaning from context.
- In responding to the final question of **Section Two**, understanding of both literal and inferential writing is required. It was not always evident that candidates could distinguish between *meaning* and *effect*. Further practice on the approach to these questions on the writer's craft will be beneficial. Candidates are advised to provide a straightforward literal meaning under 'Meaning' and for 'Effect' to comment on the impact of particular words and an image, or even structure or punctuation.

General comments

Candidates were asked to answer questions on two passages, the first entitled 'Major Sporting Events' and the second entitled 'Kevin'. The first passage, 'Major Sporting Events', explored the candidates' ability to read for ideas and the second tested their reading for meaning. 22 marks were available for the summary question, with 12 of these marks being awarded for the assessment of the candidates' ability to select content points from the text of 'Major Sporting Events' and 10 marks for the assessment of their ability to express these points in a piece of writing which was relevant, well-organised and easy to follow. A further question allotted 3 marks to the testing of candidates' ability to read for ideas, in this case to distinguish fact from opinion in the first, second and fifth paragraphs of the text.

The second passage, 'Kevin', tested the candidates' literal and inferential comprehension, their understanding of vocabulary and ability to infer meaning from context, their ability to select an appropriate quotation, their use of own words to answer a question, and their appreciation of the writer's craft.

The extracts seemed to be in the main accessible to the candidates. Subtleties in the literary text led to some discriminating questions allowing stronger candidates to demonstrate their comprehension skills fully. Responses suggested that candidates had been well prepared in the format and style of questions. Most candidates used their time well, very few scripts were unfinished and in general they coped well with the layout of the answer booklets. Where questions were omitted it tended to be the final question on writer's craft, but there were very few occasions when this happened.

Both spelling and punctuation were generally good, as were handwriting and legibility.

In **Question 1(a)**, almost all candidates put information into the correct sections.

In **Question 1(b)**, candidates were advised to write between 150 and 180 words and most candidates conformed to this limit. There were obvious signs of connecting phrases being taught to candidates but many times these became instantly repetitive and failed to enhance the flow of the writing.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1(a) was the first part of the summary question, carrying 12 marks; candidates were asked to identify and write down the benefits and drawbacks of major sporting events, as outlined in the passage. The summary had to be based on the whole text, and candidates were to write their answers in note form, and were free to use either the words of the text or their own words. One content point under each heading of the rubric was given by way of illustration, although these given points were not rewarded with a mark. The test here, as with all summary writing, was to present the overarching points and to be able to separate the overarching points from examples or supporting material.

There were several points in this summary task which contained examples which illustrated or supported overarching points. Several candidates did not make the overarching points, but offered examples or supporting evidence instead, and others spoiled otherwise correct overarching points by straying into the examples or illustrations once the overarching point had been made.

Excluding the provided content points, which were not rewarded with marks, there were 15 content points, of which candidates could identify any combination up to a maximum of 12, each carrying one mark. Most candidates expressed the points either in note form or in short sentences lifted from the text; although some responses presented long, verbatim copies of the text for each content point, many responses presented the points in a concise way. Candidates were not instructed to use bullet points, although the rubric suggested that they might find it useful to do so, and the sample points given to assist them used bullets; in fact, most candidates used bullet points.

Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 gave the information in the passage which described the benefits of major sporting events, and there were eight points (excluding the first, which was given) which the candidates could make. In Paragraph 1, there were two content points, (excluding the provided first point) which were that major sporting events bring people together from different countries or nations, and that these events earn income or wealth for the host country or city. For the first of these points, it was not necessary to say that the people who were brought together from different countries were competitors, spectators or heads of state, but if the candidate decided to mention these individual groups all three had to mention, otherwise the sense of the passage was altered. Separating examples from overarching points meant that, if the Olympic Games or the football World Cup were mentioned, it had to be clear that these were examples of major sporting events and not the only events which could bring people together from different countries. For the second of the points made in the paragraph, it had to be clear that the host was a country or city; bringing wealth for the host, where it seemed that the host was being interpreted as an individual, meant something quite different and was therefore an incorrect response. Some candidates in this section repeated the idea of the given point, by referring to national anthems, medals or belonging to a particular part of the world; such answers were ignored as being unnecessary, but the candidate had wasted time in needless writing.

Paragraph 2 contained four content points. The first of these was that participants gain pleasure from competing in the sporting event, and the second was that viewing major sporting events raises the profile of

sport, or that it raises or shows the importance of keeping fit. The third content point in this paragraph was that athletes act as role models; if candidates added that this applies particularly to the young, this did not spoil the point but, if they wrote that athletes act as role models for young people, this once again blurred the distinction between the example and the overarching point. Some candidates seemed to think that 'role models' had something to do with modelling clothes; perhaps that is why they sometimes strayed into the irrelevant section of the text about the sale of merchandise. The final content point in this paragraph was that major sporting events show what endurance, training, skill, work or perseverance can achieve. As with other content points, reference to the particular examples given – in this case running, skating or goal scoring – had to be indicated as such in order not to spoil the overarching point.

In Paragraph 3, there were a further two content points, which were that major sporting events bring enjoyment to spectators, or that they unite spectators in common purpose or friendship. Merely to write that these events attract spectators was insufficient as that statement, although true, cannot in itself be seen as a benefit of major sporting events, which was the topic of the summary. Some candidates spoiled an otherwise correct response by referring to cricket fans, members of tennis clubs or football supporters; these were all examples rather than the overarching point and, if referenced, had to be indicated as being examples. The second content point in this paragraph was that sporting events can be watched at home or watched on television: a few candidates interpreted, incorrectly, the benefit as the removal of the need to travel, others as there being no need to worry about time zones.

Paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 gave the information in the passage which described the drawbacks of major sporting events, as outlined in the passage, and there were a further seven content points, excluding the given point. From Paragraph 4 candidates could make two points (excluding the provided first point), the first being that these events sometimes led to the mentality, or opinion, or view that sport is about winning at all costs; this point led logically on to the conclusion that this view of sport can lead to cheating. In fact, lifting line 34: 'the view that sport is about winning at all costs might lead to cheating' was sufficient to make both content points successfully and concisely. Some candidates wrote that there is a view that sport is about winning, but that was insufficient for the point as everyone who takes part in a sport is trying to win; it is the addition of 'at all costs' that is the drawback required by the question asked. Other candidates spoiled the point about cheating by writing: 'this leads to cheating by taking drugs', thus suggesting that all cheats take drugs, whereas the text made it clear that this happened only sometimes. Drugs did not need to be mentioned at all but, if they were, it had to be made clear that they were an example of cheating, through the use of words like 'sometimes', or 'for example' or even 'may' or 'might' or 'perhaps'.

Whereas paragraph 4 concerned participants of major sporting event, there was a shift In Paragraph 5 to the drawback of these events in relation to the host country with four content points covering this area, the first of these being that a huge or enormous amount of money is needed to host the event, or to build stadiums. Some candidates offered a reference to opening and closing ceremonies as a separate point, but this was an example and not a separate and valid point. Another drawback of major sporting events followed in this paragraph was that budgets for more useful things suffer; it was not necessary to give examples of these more useful things, namely, according to the text, healthcare, schools and roads, but if candidates chose to offer one, two or all three of these examples, it had to be clear that they were examples and not the overarching point. Some candidates copied the text at lines 40 – 41 'budgets for more useful things, such as healthcare, schools and roads, suffer' and that was correct, but many candidates who copied in this area omitted the word 'suffer' and so what they had written did not make sense and was therefore not the content point. The next content point to be found in the paragraph was that ticket prices were so expensive that local people cannot afford them or cannot afford to attend the event. It was insufficient to say that tickets were expensive, as some people obviously can afford them; the point required candidates to note the drawback for the local people. Some candidates instead wrote, or went on to write as a separate point, that depriving local people of the opportunity to attend is an injustice, but that is an opinion and not a statement and therefore had no merit as a summary point. The final point in this paragraph was centred around what happens after the event is over: stadiums lie empty, or there is no benefit for local communities. Many candidates got to the idea of there being no benefit for local communities, or that new stadiums lie empty, but these needed the addition of the idea that these were drawbacks which occurred after the sporting event rather than, by implication, during it.

In Paragraph 6, there was a further content point, which was that it is expensive to send participants to major sporting events. There was much success in identifying this but some candidates went on to give examples of medals or travel or equipment; if one of these was offered as if it were the overarching point, the response was spoiled.

In **Question 1(b)** candidates were asked to use their notes to write a summary of the benefits and drawbacks of major sporting events, as outlined in the passage. They were advised to write between 150

and 180 words (the first ten of which were given), within the space available in the answer booklet. They were asked to write up their notes from content points into a piece of writing which was relevant, well-organised and easy to follow; the most commendable results came from candidates who wrote well under relevance and coherence. Such scripts were characterised under relevance by adhering to the points of the text which were relevant to the question, avoiding the over-use of supporting details and examples, and also avoiding non-specific topic sentences, such as 'So we can see there are many benefits and many drawbacks of major sporting events.'

The most commendable responses were from candidates who expanded the relevant notes made in **Question 1(a)**, synthesising the material without repetition, examples and the over-use of unnecessary supporting detail. Although the use of own words is not compulsory, those who did use them, together with some of their own constructions to link the main ideas, created a real fluency. The best responses demonstrated an impressive coherence using a range of skilful and accurate linking devices. Weaker candidates relied on the repetitive use of 'and' or 'also' to link content and it was common for adverbs, such as 'furthermore', 'nevertheless' or 'however', to be used either repetitively or incorrectly, often seeming to be placed randomly at the beginning of a new sentence. Some candidates made no attempt to link the content and the result was a succession of simple or compound sentences which read rather like a list.

Under coherence, the better responses came from candidates whose writing was fluent, with a possible combination of similar or supporting points, with points linked in a way which aided the fluency and moved the answer on in a natural and helpful way. Better candidates used their understanding from the previous question, **Question 1(a)**, and attempted to select and paraphrase. The mark scheme allowed credit to be given for an attempt to make a content point; the point did not have to be fully made, as this assessment had been carried out in relation to **Question 1(a)**. This meant that, where an inaccurate content point had not been credited in **Question 1(a)**, for example, 'budgets for health, schools and roads suffer' it was regarded as relevant in **Question 1(b)**.

In **Question 2** candidates were to identify three of the writer's opinions, one from Paragraph 1, one from Paragraph 2, and one from Paragraph 5. The key to answering this type of question is to identify words or phrases which are subjective rather than objective, and in this case the words and phrases were 'reassuring' for the first opinion, 'nothing more thrilling' for the second opinion and 'terrible injustice' for the third.

These words supplied the first opinion that 'it is reassuring to see leaders of countries sitting together (chatting smiling and watching, when otherwise their names have been linked to hostility and suspicion towards one another.) The section of text before the bracket here was the key element which made the opinion, but the addition of the rest of the sentence, either in whole or in part, did not spoil the subjective nature of the opinion. The key subjective claim in the second opinion was 'There is nothing more thrilling than witnessing athletes at the peak of their (physical) fitness.' Finally, 'depriving locals of the opportunity to experience sporting events is a terrible injustice' was the key subjective claim which made the third opinion.

A small number of candidates offered their own opinions rather than the writer's opinion as required by the rubric. One or two candidates referred to the second passage for their responses. It was possible to gain credit for expressing the opinion of the text in own words; very few candidates attempted this method of answering and it is probably advisable to lift the opinion from the text.

Comments on specific questions

Section 2

As is usually the case, most candidates seemed to find the narrative text more challenging than the non-narrative Passage 1.

Question 3(a) was a literal comprehension question asking what opportunity Kevin's mother was referring to, the answer being that it was the opportunity to go to high school. This was the customary first and relatively straightforward question designed to ease candidates into this section of the Paper.

The lift of 'Kevin had recently started high school' was an acceptable response, as was simply 'high school'. Responses such as 'the opportunity to attend school' or 'the opportunity to get an education' were incorrect, as presumably Kevin's parents had received some form of early education rather than no education at all. A few candidates wrote, incorrectly, that Kevin's father could have been a teacher instead of working in a shop.

Question 3(b) was another literal comprehension question asking candidates for the evidence that Kevin's father was interested in his own education, and most candidates successfully said that the evidence was that he attempted or did the exercises from Kevin's textbooks. Incorrect responses were those which said that he helped Kevin with his homework or that he did Kevin's homework; mentioning that idea spoiled an otherwise correct response, as the question asked about the father's interest in his own education and not in Kevin's.

In **Question 4(a)** candidates were asked why Kevin's father had to try to 'edge closer to the mirror'. This was a discriminating inferential question where the level of difficulty had been increased. Very many candidates picked up on the first idea, which was that he was shaving. Some added extra information, such as 'to shave more accurately' or 'so that he would not cut his face'; such responses were correct but the addition of the extra information was unnecessary. But the second idea for a correct response was more elusive, being that he was making space for Kevin, or that Kevin was in his way, or that the room was tiny and there were two people in it, or that the room was tiny and Kevin had come in. Some candidates wrote that the room was tiny, but that was illogical as, if the room was tiny, the mirror would have been closer than it would have been in a bigger room, and so there would have been no need to 'edge closer' to it. The word 'edged' was the link with the father having to move in a small space that had seemingly become smaller because there were now two people in it. Some candidates offered responses like 'to see his face' but that was merely to offer the reason for having a mirror, not the reason for having to edge closer to it. Some candidates wrote that he wanted to see Kevin's book in the mirror, which is an unlikely and odd way to look at a book, and so such a response was considered incorrect. As they grappled to find the second reason why the father tried to 'edge closer to the mirror', some candidates gave the same reason twice, writing for example **(i)** he was shaving and **(ii)** he wanted to shave better. Others guessed an answer, such as 'he had poor eyesight', rather than using the evidence of the passage.

Question 4(b) was a fairly straightforward inferential question which asked why Kevin's father could not see the towel, the answer being that his face was covered in soap or that he had soap in his eyes. A few candidates wrote that he was covered in soap, which was inaccurate and vague, but generally there was much success with this question.

Question 5 was another two-mark question, asking candidates why Kevin's father called out the answers 'with great speed.' Most candidates successfully made the first point, which was that he was in a hurry, or that he did not have time. An incorrect response here was to lift 'he rushed out the door' although 'he was in a rush' or 'he was rushing' or 'he was rushing to go out' were acceptable. Some candidates wrote two versions of this point writing, e.g. **(i)** he was in a rush and **(ii)** he did not have time.' Only one of these duplicated responses could be accepted. Another common incorrect response was to write that Kevin's father wanted Kevin to do the work himself, but that was not a reason for calling out the answers 'with great speed.' The second mark in this question was allocated to Kevin's father being confident; an inference drawn from line 16: 'he confidently called them out with great speed', the inference being that someone who was sure he was correct would have the confidence to answer quickly without too much thinking.

Question 6(a) was the first of the questions on the Paper which required candidates to answer in their own words. They were to explain what the candidates were doing when they 'dropped their voices until Mr Waldo was out of earshot' with the expressions to be recast being 'dropped their voices' and 'out of earshot'. 'Dropped their voices' could be paraphrased by 'lowered' or 'reduced' or 'decreased' their 'sound' or 'volume' or even 'noise', or they could write 'they spoke quietly'. Additionally, 'dropped their voices' did not mean that they stopped talking or that they were silent, simply that they were talking or speaking more quietly or softly, or that they were whispering. In order to successfully paraphrase 'out of earshot', candidates had to infer that Mr Waldo was moving or had moved, and then to supply the idea that he had moved sufficiently so that he was unable to hear the candidates (not that they were unable to hear him, as it was the candidates who were talking and not the teacher.) This meant that entirely correct responses were something like: 'they whispered until Mr Waldo had gone away and could not hear them' or 'they reduced their volume until Mr Waldo was too far away to hear them.' Common incorrect responses were to write that the candidates were silent, or to supply the idea of Mr Waldo being unable to hear them while at the same time suggesting he was right there in front of them. Some candidates took their responses from lines 19 – 20, focusing incorrectly on the idea that Mr Waldo was the teacher who commanded the most respect; this was the possible reason for them dropping their voices but did nothing to paraphrase the expression. Other candidates appeared to confuse hearing and sight, writing, incorrectly, that Mr Waldo could not see them.

In **Question 6(b)**, candidates were asked for one word in Paragraph 4 which reinforced the idea of 'dramatic', the answer being 'theatrical'. This was generally well done and, given the fact that candidates had to look earlier in the text for the answer, rather than after the word 'dramatic', and given that the paragraph was a fairly long one, it was to the candidates' credit that so many of them were able to link drama with

theatre, thereby finding the required word. Common incorrect responses were 'crash', 'crack', 'snap' and 'slovenliness'.

Question 6(c) was another inferential question, asking what Mr Waldo was suggesting when he picked up the exercise book 'with the corner between thumb and forefinger.' Candidates were being asked to infer that the book was disgusting or dirty, or that he was disgusted by it; it was also acceptable to offer a more generalised response such as 'he hated dirty things' or that he had high standards of cleanliness or that he wanted the candidates to keep their book clean. Many wrote some version of this, although a lot of candidates offered the statement that dropping the exercise book out of the window was the answer.

In **Question 7**, candidates were asked why Kevin did not know immediately what Mr Waldo thought of his answers. This was a literal comprehension question where the two correct responses were separated by an irrelevant stretch of text. The first correct response was that Mr Waldo was expressionless, or that his face registered no emotion, and many candidates found this answer. However, many candidates strayed into the irrelevant stretch of text for the second answer, writing, incorrectly, the information from line 35: 'He would let a candidate ramble on and on with great imagination until that candidate faltered and admitted that he did not know something.' As this was a general point referring to how Mr Waldo treated all his students, it was not specific enough to answer the question being asked here, the answer to which was that it was a long time before Mr Waldo spoke, or that Mr Waldo was silent for a long time, or that he made Kevin wait a long time before he spoke. Another common incorrect response was to write that Mr Waldo let Kevin go through the whole exercise without interrupting him, or that he was waiting anxiously for a comment, but the text does not support the idea that the teacher should have interrupted him or that that would ever be a reasonable way for a teacher to behave.

Question 8 was the second of the questions on the Paper which required candidates to answer in their own words and asked how the students reacted to the situation when they 'giggled quietly behind their hands at Kevin's assertion' with the key ideas being 'giggled' and 'assertion'. There were very many ways in which the correct answer for 'giggled' could be captured, with words such as 'laughed', 'sniggered' or 'chuckled'. Phrases were also acceptable, such as 'they thought it was funny' or 'they were amused'. In order to capture the idea of 'assertion', words such as 'statement', 'claim' or 'answer' were sought, or phrases such as 'what he said.' Among candidates' responses, there were many correct paraphrases of 'assertion', such as 'excuse', 'justification', 'challenge' and 'comment'; words such as 'reason', 'reaction', 'confession' or 'certainty' were not acceptable responses as they did not fit the overall context of what was going on. Candidates were required to respond to the context in which Kevin was challenging the teacher. Many candidates re-cast 'behind their hands' and, although this was not being assessed, it did not obscure a correct response.

In **Question 9**, candidates were asked why it was 'too late' for Kevin. Many candidates picked up on the fact that it was the emotional effect of the encounter with Mr Waldo in the classroom which made it 'too late' for Kevin, so that correct responses were that he had been embarrassed or humiliated, or that all the class knew his father did his homework, or that all the other students had laughed at him. Incorrect responses were those which merely stated what had happened, for example his answers were wrong, or he said his father did his homework – this type of response did not address the hurt or shame which Kevin felt. Some candidates took the idea of lateness literally, writing, incorrectly, that the class was over or that the others had left or that Kevin would be late for his next class.

Question 10 took the form of five multiple-choice synonym questions. In each, candidates had to choose the word which best fitted the word being tested from four options. Here, candidates are advised to work out the best possible choice by taking each word back to the context and choosing wisely. As already indicated, this question should be seen as an inferential question rather than a straightforward vocabulary question. The most successful attempts were with **Question 9(a)**, where 'sometimes' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'occasionally', with **Question 9(d)**, where 'paused' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'faltering', and with **Question 9(e)**, where 'certainty' was correctly chosen as the synonym for 'conviction', the most common incorrect answer being 'hope'. Less successful were **Question 9(b)** where the correct answer was 'reversed' for 'backed', and where many candidates incorrectly offered 'supported', and with **Question 10(c)** where 'stressful' was the correct synonym for 'tense' and where very many candidates incorrectly offered 'frightened'.

Question 11, was the final question on the Paper, on writer's craft. In each section, **Question 11(a)** and **Question 11(b)**, candidates were asked to give the meaning of an expression as used in the text, followed by the effect of the expression. As in past series, many candidates were imprecise with their responses to meaning and often confused meaning with effect.

Question 11(a) directed candidates to the expression ‘the sweeping hand gesture brought the students quickly to their feet’ and asked for its meaning and its effect. Candidates could either give the meaning of ‘sweeping hands’, as in ‘he moved his hands’, or the meaning of ‘gesture’, as in ‘indicated’ or ‘signalled’. One of these re-castings had then to be linked to the result of the ‘sweeping hands’, or of the ‘gesture’, which was that the students ‘stood up’, or ‘stood’, or some other re-casting of ‘to their feet.’ Examples of correct responses were ‘he moved his hands and the students stood up’ or ‘he indicated to the students that they should stand up.’ Many candidates spoiled their answer here by dealing with one but not both of the areas to be re-cast, writing incorrectly, for example, ‘his sweeping hand gesture made them stand up’ or ‘his moving hands brought them to their feet’.

The effect of this expression could focus on either Mr Waldo or the students. Correct responses were that the expression shows that Mr Waldo was strict, or that he had authority, or that the students always obeyed Mr Waldo. A common incorrect response was to write that the students were afraid of Mr Waldo – that may have been correct, but was an inference drawn from the expression rather than its effect.

In **Question 11(b)**, candidates were directed to the expression “A shop!” Mr Waldo mimicked’ and asked for its meaning and its effect. For meaning, candidates could focus on either the meaning of ‘mimicked’ or a response to Mr Waldo’s tone as conveyed by the exclamation mark. If they opted for a re-casting of ‘mimicked’, they could write ‘he copied’ or ‘he imitated’ but had to add ‘what Kevin said’, and not simply ‘A shop!’ Some candidates misunderstood what Mr Waldo was mimicking, writing incorrectly that he was imitating how Kevin spoke rather than what he said. If they opted to respond to the effect of the exclamation mark, they had to write that Mr Waldo was mocking/ridiculing/laughing at Kevin’s father, or mocking/ridiculing/laughing at the fact that Kevin’s father worked in a shop, or that he was mocking/ridiculing/laughing at the idea of working in a shop, in general.

The key to seeing the effect here was to respond to Mr Waldo’s unpleasant character by writing that he was mean, cruel, uncaring or callous, or that he was enjoying humiliating Kevin, or trying to humiliate Kevin. Alternatively, candidates could write that the effect of the expression was that Mr Waldo was putting on a show or exhibition for the class.