

# FRENCH

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Paper 0520/12

Listening

## Key messages

- The performance of candidates on this paper was similar to that seen in the last examination session. Candidates usually scored well on the first two sections of the paper. As intended, the last section was found to be more challenging but a good number of candidates managed to score quite good marks on this section. The examination was accessible to candidates.
- Candidates should be reminded to write clearly in blue or black pen. Some candidates continue to write first in pencil and then overwrite answers in pen. This can be very difficult to read. Candidates should cross out any material which they do not wish the Examiner to consider.
- Poor handwriting was again apparent this March making some scripts hard to read.
- Many candidates now appreciate the need to write as briefly as possible. Full sentences are not required in responses and candidates should be aware that if answers are long, there is the danger that extra distorting details may be included which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer.
- Answers were marked on the basis of communication and comprehension.
- It is important that candidates are made aware of the need to indicate the correct number of ticks in multiple choice and box ticking exercises. In a few cases, candidates ticked an incorrect number of boxes on **Question 16**.

## General comments

This session's paper was found to be generally in keeping with the demands made in previous sessions. The candidature overall performed well on the first two sections of the paper. Nearly all candidates went on to attempt the final section with weaker candidates being able to be successful on a few questions in each of the two exercises. The candidature was usually familiar with the demands and structure of the paper and rubrics were usually well understood. As last year, there were incidents of some candidates being unsure as to the correct number of boxes to be ticked on **Question 16**. The exercises discriminated appropriately across the gradient of difficulty in the paper. It was also evident that the examined topics and contexts were accessible to all candidates.

As last year, the French extracts heard by candidates gradually increased in terms of length and density and featured both monologues and conversations. The emphasis of the questions moved from targeting the candidates' ability to pick out information contained in short factual pieces, to testing their ability to understand specific factual information, as well as opinions and explanations, in longer narrated accounts and conversations. Longer extracts featured a variety of register and references to both past and future events. Vocabulary which is tested in the first two sections of the test is drawn from the vocabulary as set out in the Defined Content.

This year it was clear that candidates in many Centres had appreciated the need to write as **briefly and clearly as possible** and that full sentences were not required in response. Brief answers are preferable on this paper as candidates do not run the risk of extra distorting material being added which may invalidate an otherwise correct answer. Candidates should also not answer or infer from general knowledge as they run the risk of adding extra material which is not on the recording and this will invalidate an otherwise correct answer. There were, again, cases of poor handwriting during this session which, at times, made it very difficult to read answers whether they were brief or long. Centres must stress to candidates the need to write clearly and **not to use pencil to make a first attempt and then overwrite this in pen**. Please remind all candidates that, if they wish to make a second attempt at an answer, they should cross out their first attempt very clearly. Any answer which a candidate does not wish the Examiner to consider should also be clearly crossed out.

The Listening Paper tests comprehension. Accuracy in written responses in French is not an issue provided that the message is clear. If the answer sounds and reads like French it will be accepted provided that the message is unambiguous.

Candidates need to use the pauses on the recordings to read the questions carefully. Centres are reminded that reading time for each exercise is included in the pauses throughout the paper and there is not extra reading time before the examination starts. It is important to give candidates practice on past papers to ensure that they are familiar with the rubrics and when the pauses occur. It also helps to remind candidates that they can expect to hear all recordings twice.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section 1**

##### **Exercise 1 Questions 1–8**

This first exercise tested the understanding of eight short conversations/monologues through multiple choice questions with visual options. Candidates usually performed well on this opening exercise which is intended to give them a confident start to the paper. The extracts were straightforward and short and the vocabulary areas tested time, food, personal objects, clothing and places where these items could be found, places at home and shopping. Rubrics were generally well understood by candidates.

Nearly all candidates answered **Questions 1 and 2** correctly. **Question 3** was approached quite well and candidates were usually able to identify *les baskets* on **Question 4** but on **Question 5**, *brosse à dents* was not always well known. The most difficult item of vocabulary tested on the exercise proved to be on **Question 6** with a fair proportion of candidates showing that they were not familiar with the word *couloir*. **Questions 7 and 8** were attempted more successfully and were usually well done.

##### **Exercise 2 Questions 9–15**

Candidates heard a longer extract which featured a talk to a group of students visiting a French school. Questions tested school subjects, places in school, school rules, and sporting activities. Candidates generally performed well on this exercise with good numbers performing well on **Questions 9, 10, and 12**. On **Question 11**, candidates sometimes were unable to identify 23 and wrote 3 instead, only hearing the last part of the number. On **Question 12**, option **C** was usually seen in incorrect answers. The final three questions proved to be very accessible to candidates and high numbers performed very well on these questions.

#### **Section 2**

##### **Exercise 1 Question 16**

Performance on this exercise was good and continues to improve as many candidates become accustomed to the exercise type and its requirements. There were still however cases of candidates ticking more than six boxes or four boxes only. Candidates should be reminded to use a consistent method to indicate their answers: ticks **or** crosses are both acceptable, but are likely to cause confusion when used together. Candidates should not attempt to put a tick and a cross in all boxes. Six of the twelve boxes need to be left blank.

Candidates heard four young people talking about life in their home town. Candidates again found this topic area and associated vocabulary to be familiar and made good attempts at the exercise with even the weakest candidates often being able to score at least 2 marks. No particular pattern of incorrectly ticked boxes could be seen by Examiners. As in the last session, a good number of candidates scored at least 4 marks on this exercise which was, overall, well done.

##### **Exercise 2 Questions 17–21**

In this exercise, candidates heard two interviews with Luc, a Canadian who talked about his childhood and his present life. In the first part of the interview, candidates were required to correct an incorrect detail in each of five statements, a question type with which they were clearly familiar. The missing words were all items which appear in the vocabulary lists of the Defined Content. The exercise represented a step up in the incline of difficulty of the test and the extract heard was longer than that heard in the previous exercise.

**Question 17** which required candidates to identify the word *francophone* was well attempted by most candidates. **Question 18** was also well done with many able to identify the frequently met word, *parlait*. Answers in tenses other than the imperfect or in an infinitive were acceptable as they showed comprehension of the key concept. **Question 19** was quite well done. Candidates had to identify *capitale* but sometimes identified the material which they heard after the word and wrote *spécialiste* instead. Candidates were fairly successful in identifying the very common word *voiture* on **Question 20** despite the variations seen in spelling. **Question 21** proved to be a little more difficult with *surpris* sometimes being rendered by the word *appris* or *pris* or as two separate words *sur* and *pris*. Incorrectly split words cannot gain the mark as comprehension is not shown. Other incorrect answers included spellings such as *supis*. The spelling had to include at least one letter “r” to gain the mark. This last question was the one found to be most difficult by candidates on this exercise.

### Exercise 2 Questions 22–25

The second part of this exercise featured a continuation of the interview with Luc. Questions required short answers in French. Candidates made good attempts on the whole on this exercise and answered **Questions 22** and **24** quite well. Most could identify that Luc had lived with his aunt whilst studying but the answer written as *tente* did not gain the mark. The question which proved most difficult was **Question 23**. Only a minority of candidates were successful in identifying *le droit*. Many attempted instead to try to render *avocat*. Many were able to communicate that he needed to talk for work. Answers which were acceptable either gave the noun *travail* or part of the verb *travailler*. The last question on this exercise was very well done with candidates being able to score the mark for *film* or *documentaire*.

### Section 3

#### Exercise 1 Questions 26–31

Candidates heard an interview with Matthieu who had lived in Antarctica with his family. The question type used was multiple choice with written options. Questions tested not just specific factual information but also gist understanding over the longer extract. Candidates needed to identify attitudes and emotions in some questions and be able to understand a narrative which, in places, depended upon them understanding a sequence of events. The exercise discriminated well across the candidature and a full range of performance was seen with many scoring 3 or 4 marks. Candidates generally made quite a good attempt at this exercise and even weaker candidates were usually able to score 1 or 2 marks. Candidates did well on the first three questions and the last question of the exercise but fared less well on **Questions 29** and **30**. There was no discernible pattern of incorrect answers for these two questions. On other questions, candidates were able to identify key words in the extract and were able to follow the narrative. Options in the answers were deliberately expressed in accessible language with fairly short options so as to lessen the need for excessive reading whilst listening. Candidates need to be reminded to make careful use of the reading time before the extract is heard. If candidates wish to choose a different option from the one first chosen they should remember to cross out the option first chosen. If two boxes are ticked the mark cannot be awarded.

#### Exercise 2 Questions 32–40

As last year, this was found to be a suitably demanding and appropriately challenging exercise at this stage of the paper. Many weaker candidates made commendable efforts to answer at least some questions and were usually able to score a few marks. Candidates heard an interview with a young volunteer worker, Sabrina, who had worked in Turkey. There was a good mix of harder and more accessible questions on this last exercise. Most candidates scored some marks with some questions only being successfully answered by the most able, as intended.

On **Question 32**, most had heard the age 25 but many did not listen carefully and hear the *moins de* before the age. The notion of *moins de* was necessary for the mark. **Question 33** also required careful listening to identify that everything was paid for. Here, care was needed when expressing the answer as *tout payant* was sometimes given in response and it gave a very different message from the correct one, *tout (est) payé*. Candidates generally approached **Question 34** more successfully and good numbers were able to identify the key concept and give acceptable spellings of *centre culturel*. **Question 35** was found to be one of the most difficult on the paper with relatively small numbers being successful in hearing and rendering that Sabrina got on well with Max. Here, a reflexive pronoun was required to answer correctly as the verbs *s’entendre* and *entendre* convey very different concepts. This was not beyond the more able candidates. Any part of the reflexive verb *s’entendre* and the word *bien* used with it gained the mark. Incorrect attempts featured answers using other verbs such as parts of *attendre*. Candidates coped better on **Question 36** with good numbers able to communicate in an acceptable form *spectacle musical*. A fairly frequently seen

incorrect answer was *spectacular musical* showing that the word *spectacle* was not well known. On **Question 37**, quite good numbers were able to understand and give an acceptable spelling of *répétition(s)* but some went on to invalidate their answer by adding extra material such as the rehearsals lasted 10 hours. The addition of such incorrect material distorted the message conveyed and meant the mark could not be awarded. It is well worth reminding candidates to keep answers brief and to be concise as lots of extra material may run the risk of invalidating an otherwise correct answer. The correct answer for **Question 38** required the concept of singing together. *Chanter* was fairly well known but the word *ensemble* was not always well known. Some invalidated their answers by adding extra material about writing the songs in English and French. This material was referred to in the transcript but candidates needed to identify *ce qu'ils ont le plus aimé plus chanter ensemble*. Answers to **Question 39** indicated that some weaker candidates needed to read the question with greater care as they were asked where Sabrina went with the mother. Some candidates invalidated their answers by adding lots of material about eating with the family which did not answer the question but fair numbers were successful in identifying the commonly met word *marché*. **Question 40** proved to be a suitably discriminating last question and the more able candidates identified the concept of new friends. Frequently seen incorrect and incomplete answers indicated ideas such as *amis sur Facebook* which was material heard near the tested material but which alone did not answer the question. The question was phrased in such a way that the short answer *nouveaux amis* was sufficient to gain the mark. Some candidates attempted to write a verb but renderings such as *devoir* invalidated their answer as another concept was conveyed.

# FRENCH

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Paper 0520/22  
Reading

## Key messages

To maximise their chances of success on this paper, candidates should:

- select carefully only that information from the text that answers the question, in particular in the last two exercises
- check whether some manipulation is required in order for the answer to be correct
- answer all questions, especially the non-verbal questions.

## General comments

Almost all candidates completed the paper, so candidates appeared to have sufficient time. Examiners saw a full range of performance, and almost all candidates were appropriately entered for the examination. Scripts were legible and where candidates had crossed out work it was almost always clear what their intended response was.

## Comments on specific questions

### *Section 1*

#### **Exercise 1 Questions 1–5**

Over half of candidates scored full marks for the opening question. Almost all candidates had little difficulty with **Questions 1** and **2**. **Questions 3** and **5** gave the most problems, with **C** a commonly chosen distractor for **Question 5**.

#### **Exercise 2 Questions 6–10**

Again scores for this exercise were generally high and full marks were common. Some candidates had difficulty with **Questions 9** and **10**, *poubelle* in particular seeming unknown, leading candidates to select **D**.

#### **Exercise 3 Questions 11–15**

**Questions 12** and **14** caused candidates virtually no problems. **B** was a favoured distractor for **Question 11**, and **Questions 13** and **15** caused a minority of candidates to select an incorrect answer.

### *Section 2*

#### **Exercise 1 Questions 16–20**

For this exercise, candidates completed statements in French, choosing words from a list. *Campagne*, *cinquante* and *compris* were commonly chosen distractors for **Questions 16**, **18** and **19** respectively. Some candidates appeared to make use only of perceived meaning of the option words and the text, and did not use the grammatical markers in the sentences to assist with narrowing down their options, e.g. that the answer to **Question 16** has to be a feminine, singular noun.

### Exercise 2 Questions 21–30

For this exercise, candidates were required to read a more extended text in the form of an email from Éric to his friend Ludovic on the subject of a recent project in school. The text was mostly straightforward and the subject matter was familiar. Most candidates were able to cope with the demands of the task. Although long answers are not required, and often only a few words would answer the question, many candidates chose to copy a couple of sentences from the text for each question. For this exercise, extraneous material and incorrect tenses are usually ignored as long as they do not in some way invalidate the candidate's correct response.

In **Question 21**, some candidates did not mention that it was a school project, although almost all were able to identify when the project took place, although *la semaine dernière* was often surrounded by a lot of extra material. The question words at the beginning of the sentences were not universally known, and it was apparent that some candidates were making mistakes due to this. *Quand* and *quelle* provided most difficulty in this exercise, such as **Questions 26** and **27**. Not all candidates realised that *débats* was the answer to **Question 30**, selecting *certificats* instead.

### Section 3

#### Exercise 1 Questions 31–35

In **Section 3**, examiners are expecting a higher level of attention to detail, and for candidates to be more selective of the information they take from the reading texts when correcting the false statements. Candidates are reminded that they should not merely write the opposite of the statement, and need to look for the alternative information.

Most candidates correctly identified **Questions 31** and **34** as being false, but **Question 33** was sometimes ticked as false in preference to **Question 35**. Candidates cannot be credited with a justification if they have ticked *VRAI* for the statement, so there is no benefit in writing a justification for every response.

In terms of the justifications, for **Question 31**, candidates sometimes targeted the wrong information, such as the *trousse d'infirmière*. Where the correct information was selected, the addition of *langue indispensable pour travailler dans l'humanitaire* often invalidated. For **Question 34**, some candidates wrote about what Sophie imagined she would be doing rather than what she did instead of having contact with patients, or alternatively that it was the local nurses who dealt with the patients. For **Question 35**, it was usually the addition of extra information relating to her training that invalidated the response.

#### Exercise 2 Questions 36–41

This final exercise was intended to be the most challenging part of the paper, and at least some of the questions require candidates to manipulate their selected information from the text. Where candidates lost marks it was often through writing too much and including information that did not answer the question. Candidates are advised to look at the number of lines to indicate the expected length of answer.

Some candidates left answers blank in this segment, and only a minority scored full marks. There was again some evidence of question words such as *quand* not being known.

Apart from the inclusion of extra material, other reasons for losing marks were incorrect tenses of verbs, such as *il fait du ski* in **Question 36**, or not reading the question closely enough, such as **Question 39**. Many copied the sentence about carrying out the necessary changes in the workplace, starting the sentence with *il* as per the text, not realising that in answer to the question, *il* would be Romain, not the employer.

Miscopying also lost marks in some cases, such as *moins* for *mois*, *boit* for *bout*, and *adaptions* for *adaptations*.

# FRENCH

Paper 0520/03  
Speaking

## Key messages

- The standard of performance was similar to the standard heard in 2015.
- The role play sections were usually attempted well. Good Examiners did not create or change cues and tasks. Candidates needed to be concise and stick closely to the tasks to score well.
- **Many Examiners did not observe the correct timings for the exam.** Many of the tests in this session were **much too short** in the conversation sections and, in particular, in the topic/conversation section. In some cases, the topic conversation section was missed out.
- Centres usually remembered to include questions in the general conversation section which would elicit past and future tenses from candidates. This was, however, often not the case in the topic/conversation. This resulted in downwards adjusting to marks. **Such tense usage is essential if candidates are to score more than 6 marks for Language.**
- The best performances at all levels of ability were in Centres where there had **not** been over preparation of work and in which spontaneous and natural conversations could develop.
- In many Centres, Examiners covered too many topics too superficially in the general conversation section. Centres should aim to cover only two or three topics in this section with each candidate.
- The quality of recordings was usually good and samples arrived promptly.

## General comments

The format of the test was as last year.

Centres were usually well aware that there were three sections to the test. The Role Play section was usually conducted well in Centres. Examiners usually stuck well to the given cues, prompting where necessary and encouraging candidates to work for the marks. Examiners who did veer away from the script and changed the tasks or who did not prepare fully sometimes made this section of the test harder for the candidates. There were, in this examination session, many cases of very short tests in the conversation sections.

**Centres must understand that, if conversation sections are short, this will adversely affect candidates' marks.** In such cases, candidates are not given the opportunity to develop their ideas and use a range of structures and tenses. It cannot be over-emphasised that it is in the interests of fairness to all candidates to make sure that each candidate is given the full examination time of 5 minutes per conversation section.

Candidates had usually made good use of the 15-minute preparation time. Centres are reminded that Examiners may have access to the confidential test materials (Teachers' Notes Booklet and Role Play Cards) in the four working days before the first Speaking test is conducted in order for the Examiner to prepare for his/her role. **Centres are reminded that the contents of these materials are confidential and must not be shared with candidates.** The confidential test materials must be returned to the secure storage facility after preparation has taken place and after each session of examining. Once the last Speaking test has been conducted, the materials must remain in secure storage until the end of the Speaking test period. Centres are reminded that candidates must not be allowed to do any writing during their preparation time and must not be allowed to bring any written materials with them into the preparation area.

Examiners need to understand the requirements of the mark scheme in order that they ask the right sort of questions which will stretch candidates and give them the opportunity to fulfil the descriptors in the higher mark bands. For example, Examiners who included unexpected questions and went beyond the straightforward "closed" questions gave candidates the possibility of scoring in the Good band or above on Table B, Communication. **It is also essential to include questions which will elicit past and future tenses in both conversation sections as candidates need to show they can use both of these tenses for a mark of more than 6 to be awarded on Table C, Language.**

Centres are reminded to make a clear transition between the Topic conversation and the General conversation. This transition should be in French. The links between the different parts of the test should not be in English.

The full requirements of the test are clearly laid out in the Teachers' Notes booklet and all Centres are strongly advised to read through these in advance of the test so that they have plenty of time to clarify any uncertainties.

- **Clerical checks and sample size**

In the vast majority of Centres, the clerical work had usually been completed efficiently and Centres are thanked for this. It is essential that all clerical work is checked very carefully so as to ensure that candidates receive the correct mark in Centres. On the working mark sheet, the addition of the individual marks for each candidate should be checked to ensure that the total mark is correct. Then, for each candidate, the transfer of the marks from the working mark sheet to the MS1 mark sheet (or the electronic marks file) must also be checked.

Centres generally understood the requirements of the sample size well and samples were nearly always correct. New Centres are reminded to check the instructions on sample size carefully and to ask for advice from Cambridge if they are unsure how to proceed.

- **Recording quality**

Moderators commented that a high proportion of the recordings received were of a very good quality. Centres are thanked for this. Most Centres submitted digital recordings which were very clear and eased access to the sample. Please check all recording equipment prior to the live exams. Also, please remember to avoid sticking labels on CDs and do not write on the surface of the CD without using a CD friendly pen.

Please ensure that each candidate's recording is labelled with the candidate name and number on the box for the CD and that the sound file is correctly labelled. On the CD, the recording for each candidate must be saved individually and named as follows, Centre number\_candidate number\_syllabus number\_component number. **The recording for each candidate must be on a separate file.**

A list of the featured recordings should also be submitted with each CD. Each CD must include a recorded introduction by the Examiner, listing the CD number, Centre number, examination number, examination name, name of Examiner and date. This introduction needs to be made only once, and should be saved as a separate file (named recording introduction). The Examiner and **not the candidate** must introduce the candidate by name and number and the Role Play Card number.

CDs must be carefully wrapped in some form of protective packaging before they are placed in the envelope with the moderation paperwork. The appropriate label (which includes the Centre name and a barcode) should then be placed on the envelope. The envelope containing the recordings and paperwork should then be packaged in another parcel/envelope and one of the return labels with the Cambridge address should be attached before it is returned to Cambridge. In the very few cases of extra recordings being required, Centres were quick to respond and provide new copies of recordings.

- **Application of the mark scheme**

Some Centres required no or only small adjustments to their marks to bring them in line with the agreed standard. There were, however, some large adjustments to marks in Centres. This was often a result of lenient marking in the conversation sections. **This, in turn, could often be attributed to short sections and few opportunities for candidate to answer unexpected questions or answer questions in a variety of tenses.** Some Centres had adjustments made just to part of the mark range in cases of lenient or harsh marking.

In the role plays, some Examiners did not realise that a short response, if appropriate, can earn a mark of 3. If there are two parts to a task then Examiners are free to split the task, but should only one part of a task be completed by the candidate, the maximum mark which can be awarded is 1. **If a candidate uses a verb to complete a task and makes an error of tense or conjugation, a mark of 2 and not 3 is appropriate.** Examiners are reminded that poor pronunciation should be queried especially if it prevents clear communication of a task. If pronunciation of a key element is not clear, a mark of 3 is not appropriate.



In the conversation sections, marking tended to be generous in many Centres, as marks were awarded in the higher bands when there was no evidence that candidates could respond in a spontaneous way to unexpected questions or that they could communicate consistently and accurately in past and future tenses.

Impression marks were usually awarded fairly in Centres but were a little generous in some Centres when pronunciation was not good and impeded successful communication.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### ***Role Plays***

Examiners in Centres generally prompted candidates when necessary but there are still cases of a need to prompt when candidates miss tasks. **Examiners should keep to the script provided**, not change the tasks and encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each task. If only one part of a two-part task is completed, only 1 mark can be awarded. Centres are reminded that two-part tasks are split into (i) and (ii) on the Candidate Role Play cards. This helps candidates to remember to attempt both parts of the tasks where necessary.

Candidates should be reminded that it is always important to listen to the Examiner as on all the Role Play A situations, there is a task which requires them to listen and choose from the two options offered by the Examiner. Likewise, there is always one task which requires responding to an unexpected question on the Role Play B situations. **Examiners are reminded not to change the cues in the scripts so as to ensure that the level of difficulty in the task remains the same for all candidates. Extra tasks should not be added by the Examiner.**

#### **Role Plays A**

The A role plays were found to be of equal difficulty, accessible to candidates and very similar in difficulty to the 2015 role plays. They were a fair test at this level of the test. They are designed to be easier than the B role plays and are set using vocabulary from Topic Areas A, B and C of the Defined Content. All of the A role play situations featured a task which required a question to be asked and one task which required candidates to choose an option from two provided by the Examiner. (These options should not be changed by the Examiner and should be read as on the script). Candidates generally found the tasks to be accessible and even the weakest candidates were able to score at least one mark on each task. Centres had usually trained candidates well to include a greeting and thanks where required. Centres are reminded that often a short response (perhaps one word) will be appropriate in many tasks and, in such cases, a mark of 3 can be awarded. **Examiners should query pronunciation if the meaning is not clear due to mispronunciation.** Examiners should introduce the role play and start the conversation off. English should not be used to introduce the role plays. Generally, candidates were very well prepared for the A role plays.

#### ***Buying a T-shirt***

Candidates approached this role play well. Task 1 was approached well. On Task 2, nearly all were able to communicate the size they wanted, whether a number or using *petit*, *moyen* or *grand* but those who chose to use the word *taille* often mispronounced it. Task 3 requiring a colour to be given was done well. On Task 4, some are still unable to see the difference between *C'est combien?* and *Combien de prix?* On this task, some forgot to thank the sales person. On the last task, candidates generally listened to the prompt well and were able to choose an option. Examiners who changed the set prompt and did not stick to the cue made this a harder task for candidates.

#### ***Buying croissants***

Again, this was found to be straightforward by candidates. In the first task, many mispronounced *croissants* but were able to get their message across. On the next task, a choice was required and those who listened well were able to make this without a problem. On Task 3, nearly all were able to give a correct number but there was sometimes confusion between *deux* and *des* which occasionally led to some ambiguity. The next task required candidates to make a choice of the kind of cake they wanted. It was perhaps not surprising that the vast majority of candidates chose a chocolate cake. Some gave a poor pronunciation of *chocolat*. The last task requiring thanks and a question asking the price was usually well done but, again, some used *C'est combien de prix?* instead of *C'est combien?*

### *Making a reservation at the railway station*

The first task was approached well but again, there were some poor pronunciations of *réservation*. The next task was quite well done and nearly all were successful in giving a day to travel. The third task required candidates to give a time and this was usually well done. On Task 4, candidates listened well and chose appropriately. Again, if Examiners did not stick to the cue, this made the task harder for candidates. A few forgot to thank on the last task but most were able to phrase an appropriate question. Those asking where the toilets were usually communicated the message but did not always manage to make the verb agree with the plural subject.

### **Role Plays B**

The B role plays were deliberately more demanding in that they required the ability to use different tenses, to explain, apologise and give and justify opinions. The level of challenge was balanced across the role plays. They differentiated well, but even the weakest candidates could usually score a mark on most tasks. It is important that Examiners know their own role and stick to the set tasks and most Examiners did this well. Candidates should be reminded that there will always be one task in which they have to listen to the Examiner and reply to an unprepared question. They should be advised to consider likely questions in the 15-minute preparation time, immediately prior to the Speaking test, and to listen carefully in the examination room. It must be noted also that there is always one task which will require candidates to react in some way. Some candidates seemed to be unfamiliar with the cue *Présentez vos excuses* and did not always realise that this was the standard cue for making an apology. Candidates need to be made aware of this. They should also be able to cope with giving a positive opinion about something as well as a negative one. It is also well worth remembering that one task on B role plays requires the candidate to ask an appropriate question and candidates also need to be aware of this in their preparation time. Practice in using a variety of interrogative forms is excellent examination preparation.

### *Phoning a campsite about a job*

Most were able to express that they were ringing about a job but some failed to greet the employee. Task 2 required two details about previous work to be given. Weaker candidates did not always manage to communicate in the past tense and some only gave one detail. The third task required a positive reaction to be given. This was not always well done and some omitted this part of the task. Most could say why they liked the work but not always in an appropriate tense. The response to the unexpected question required the candidate to give any logical point in the future such as a date, or a relevant time period such as *au début de mes vacances scolaires*. A full sentence was not required here to score 3 as the cue allowed a briefer response to be made. Most were well able to ask a relevant question on the last task. Many opted to ask about having to wear a uniform or the possibility of accommodation.

### *Organising a picnic*

On the first task, some mistakenly used *vous* and inferred that Alex was organising the picnic. In such cases, only 1 mark was given (for the initial greeting) and the task was not fulfilled as the wrong person was doing the organising. On the next task, which required an apology to be made, many did not complete the task and thought they had to give a list of excuses as well as explaining what they intended to do on Sunday. As mentioned above, it is well worth emphasising to candidates that this cue is the standard cue for an apology to be made. The response to the unexpected question was better done but, rather than give the name of a local beauty spot in a language other than French it is worth emphasising that place names in French should be given. The next task which required candidates to say what they were going to buy was very well done. On the last task, some encountered some difficulty in forming a correct question. The last task required an interrogative adverb and a question form to answer appropriately. Weaker candidates found this a difficult task. Some confused the use of *vous* and *tu* on this last task. Either form was acceptable provided that it was used consistently within the role play.

### *Telephoning to say "Happy New Year"*

Most were able to approach this well and were comfortable in the context. The first task was well done but some found the next task which required a question to be formulated more difficult. On Task 3, the response to the unexpected question required some indication of the person(s) the candidate was spending the day with. Most understood the question quite well and responses did not need to be long. Those who chose to make the response longer sometimes made things more complicated for themselves in terms of manipulating a verb. On Task 4, any two relevant activities were accepted and this was usually well attempted. Some only gave one activity and consequently only scored 1 mark out of a possible 3. The last

task required an opinion about festivals and this needed to be responded to in the present tense which was the tense of the question in order for 3 marks to be scored. Most gave a very positive opinion about *fêtes* and liking them as they liked being with their family.

### **Topic presentation and conversation**

The standard of work heard in this section covered a wide range of performance and standards heard across the mark range were very much in line with those heard in the last session. The **whole** section (Topic presentation and Topic conversation) should last for a full five minutes. Moderators reported that this was frequently **not** the case and that after the presentation part of this section, some Examiners passed straight on to the general conversation. **This therefore denied candidates the opportunity to converse on their chosen topic which is a required part of the test and this often disadvantaged them.** Presentation times (maximum two minutes) were usually well adhered to by candidates and many candidates had clearly prepared their topic thoroughly. **The presentation should be followed up by a conversation on this same topic for the remainder of this five minute section.** Examiners were generally aware of the need to seek out different information from what had already been presented. Some Centres, however, were very inaccurate in their timings on this section and disadvantaged their candidates. Examiners are reminded not to ask questions too early during the presentation time but to feel free to interrupt the candidate at the two minute point.

While it is expected that teachers will have prepared candidates for the follow-up conversation, if candidates are to score highly, **this must not consist of a series of pre-learnt questions and answers** in which both Examiner and candidate know what is coming and in which order. Questions should instead arise **spontaneously** as the conversation develops and in a natural way. Good examining of this section was clearly focused on the candidate's topic and featured a variety of questions to test both past and future tenses. Centres should note that Table C of the mark scheme makes clear reference to the need for candidates to use past and future tenses accurately in order for a mark of more than 6 to be awarded for language. Centres should note that marks were often adjusted downwards by Moderators in this section as it was frequently very brief and did not feature the use of past and future tenses.

Centres generally understood the need to avoid "Myself" as a suitable topic in this section of the test. New Centres should note that this is not a suitable topic for this section of the exam as it can become too much like the general conversation and leave little material to explore in the final section of the examination.

Candidates had usually prepared themselves for the presentation part of the test well and were enthusiastic about their chosen topic. Many introduced what they were going to talk about and then made good use of this time to communicate their message. The better candidates did so in a range of tenses and made good use of a variety of structures and relevant vocabulary. In this examination session, a wide range of topics was heard by Moderators. Many candidates chose this year to talk about the environment. Other popular presentations were *mes vacances*, *mon pays*, *mes loisirs*, *mes projets d'avenir*, *ma famille* and *mon école*. Festivals also remains a popular choice of topic with many giving interesting accounts of local and national festivals. Presentations on India were often very interesting and the topic was appropriate, but, Examiners are reminded of the need to avoid too many questions which require precise geographical or statistical knowledge. It is better instead to ask candidates to say what they find most interesting/like/dislike etc. about their country/another country and why. As ever, the best performances in this section were those which developed into a natural conversation and in which candidates could express not just factual information in response to straightforward questions but also give their opinions and feelings about the topic. Good examining practice was heard when Examiners clearly indicated the end of this section of the test to candidates with a phrase such as "*Maintenant on passe à la conversation générale*".

### **General conversation**

This final section of the test was, on the whole, dealt with more consistently by Examiners. Consequently, opportunities for candidates to use a variety of tenses were usually greater in this section. Centres covered an appropriate range of topics within the Centre but often they tried to cover too many topics too superficially and did not give candidates the chance to go into depth on a topic. **Two or three topics only should be covered in this section.** It is helpful on each of the two or three topics examined to include questions in different tenses rather than leave such questions until the final topic and, indeed, there were some good examples of this approach. **Centres are reminded that if there is only evidence of candidates working in the present tense then the language mark will be limited to a maximum of 6.**

It is also important to remember to cover different topics with different candidates and, if using the same topic with different candidates, to try to use different questions. Generally, Centres need to cover fewer topics and try to include a good range of questions which enable candidates to have access to the upper ends of the mark bands for communication. **Questions which are very straightforward and which require simple short responses will not give candidates access to the upper mark bands for both communication and language.** The best examining gave candidates logically related questions on a topic and featured some open ended questions such as *Parle-moi de*. This meant that candidates could try to develop their answers in a natural way. As in the Topic conversation, candidates need to be able to develop their answers, give and explain opinions and be able to respond to **unexpected** questions in order to gain high marks. A few Centres made use of the same questions in the same order on each conversation topic from candidate to candidate: **this approach must be avoided.**

It is common practice in classrooms to make use of banks of questions but over reliance on such banks in the live Speaking test can produce stilted conversations which do not flow naturally and are a test of memory rather than conversational ability. Once in the examination room, it is far better if the Examiner listens to what the candidate is saying and responds as spontaneously as possible. The best examining heard this session featured such an approach.

A wide range of candidate performance was heard by Moderators. A good number of candidates showed that they could communicate across a range of topics. Many spoke on holidays, future plans, the environment, their town/country, school, leisure activities, food and drink/health living, daily routine and their families. Some candidates not only communicated their message clearly but, as last year, were also well able to do so in accurate language which showed a good control of a range of linguistic structures and lexis and accurate, consistent use of tenses. The best work in terms of language featured an accurate range of verbs in a variety of tenses and a range of appropriate vocabulary. Such work also featured a good range of longer more complex utterances which made use of structures such as *si* + imperfect plus a conditional tense, *avant de* + infinitive, perfect infinitives, *depuis* and, occasionally, compound tenses. This remains even more impressive when such structures are heard in response to unexpected questions which arise naturally in the course of a conversation.

It was clear from the work heard in many Centres that oral work has become central to foreign language learning activities in many IGCSE classrooms. Many candidates heard by Moderators were enthusiastic about their chance to have learned French and were fully aware of how important a skill it could be to them in the future when entering the world of further studies and work. It was also heartening to hear many say they had enjoyed their experience of learning French.

# FRENCH

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Paper 0520/42  
Writing

## Key messages

- Candidates should read carefully each question.
- Where there is a choice of question, candidates should choose the option which best allows them to demonstrate the linguistic knowledge they have.
- The most successful answers focused clearly on the individual tasks within each question, were well structured and showed signs of thoughtful planning.
- Candidates aiming for the highest grades should use a range of verb tenses, sentence structures, and more complex linguistic patterns.
- Candidates should always aim for a high standard of legibility and presentation.

## General comments

The work seen suggested that the overall majority of candidates had been well prepared for this examination and that the new format is now fully understood. The full ability range was represented. The gradient of difficulty in the questions allowed the vast majority of candidates to show what they knew and could do.

### **Question 1**

The vast majority of candidates provided a list which related directly to the illustrations provided. Candidates should be reminded that if they cannot recall a particular word, they are free to add different items which are not in the pictures but which fit the context of the question.

### **Question 2**

#### Communication

One mark is awarded for each relevant detail. It is a requirement that candidates use a verb for each piece of information in order to gain a mark. Up to ten marks are awarded across the question. There is no requirement to provide the same amount of information for each task, however candidates should be advised that marks for Communication are awarded only to information directly required by the tasks.

The most straightforward way of gaining full marks is to address each task in a new sentence and where possible to add extra relevant detail. Provided that each new piece of information is given in a sentence or clause with an appropriate verb, marks will be awarded.

Candidates are also reminded that the maximum of 10 marks for Communication cannot be accessed if they omit a task.

#### Accuracy

The published criteria offer a clear guide to what is expected. Candidates should use basic sentence structure, using appropriate verb forms, definite/indefinite articles, adjectives, time phrases and prepositional phrases.

**Question 3** offered a choice of three options: a letter, a blog, a story line to be continued.

A crucial decision for candidates is: which question will allow me to show best the French that I know? This is particularly important given the method by which marks are awarded across the three categories. Candidates are advised therefore to read all three options before making their choice. A close reading of the tasks within the questions is recommended: this will allow candidates to think about the vocabulary, verb tenses and structures which will be needed in order to respond effectively and fully to the question.

Frequently the rubric provides key vocabulary. Candidates should always copy correctly key vocabulary items from the rubric and also look for clues of the gender of any significant nouns.

In the very best work, the language flowed naturally.

Communication: in order to gain the 2 marks available for each task, candidates must respond to each of the five tasks using a tense which is appropriate. Candidates are strongly advised to answer each task in the tense used in the rubric. The use of a different tense will distort the meaning and invariably lead to the loss of marks.

As with **Question 2**, there was some evidence to suggest that candidates thought that they must only write 140 words. The recommendation is a guideline: it reflects the fact that the question can be answered effectively within that amount of words. A small number of candidates crossed out important pieces of information. The act of editing a piece on completion is quite difficult if there is little time available. Unfortunately, some candidates crossed out details which were vital for the successful completion of the task.

Verbs: ticks are awarded to correct verbs. The maximum mark of 8 is awarded for 18 verbs; there were instances where candidates produced more than that. Candidates must remember that each different form of a verb earns a tick. Repeated correct forms of a verb do not qualify for a tick. By way of illustration, when expressing their opinions about situations and events, instead of using the same verb each time, many candidates used a variety of verbs which conveyed the same notion: *je pense, je trouve, je crois* and when appropriate, used them in different tenses.

Other Linguistic Features: the published table of grade descriptors highlights the range of language structures expected. The strongest candidates will be able to demonstrate among other things, varied sentence patterns using subordinate clauses such as *quand, si, parce que, car, qui, que*, object pronouns, linking words/conjunctions (e.g. *donc, cependant*), strong negatives (e.g. *ne... jamais, ne... plus*), comparative/ superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs, prepositions such as *depuis, pendant, pour*, and be familiar with some less common vocabulary, pertinent to the subject matter. It is important for all candidates to show control of basic structures, including correct spelling, gender, adjectival agreement, possessive adjectives, expressions of quantity, common prepositions.

As mentioned earlier, the recommended word count was generally very well respected. Unfortunately, some candidates, thinking that this recommendation was mandatory, crossed out some work in order to meet the target and, in so doing, deprived themselves of valuable marks across all three categories of the assessment. Candidates should be advised to write the recommended amount, as excessive length often leads to error and repetition, however, they should be very careful when deleting work.

## **Comments on specific questions**

### **Section 1**

#### **Question 1 *Vous voulez offrir un cadeau d'anniversaire à votre ami(e)***

The vast majority of candidates were able to gain all the marks available here. The presents illustrated were readily recognised and there were relatively few candidates who needed to think of alternative items. There were some instances where the word offered did not meet the criteria, e.g. *chapeau* was occasionally written as *château*, the mis-spelling of *gâteau* suggested a word with a quite different meaning. Candidates were enabled to score well in this question because, as the Mark Scheme demonstrates, there were different, equally valid words e.g. *montre – pendule, horloge; fleurs – bouquet, plante; stylo – bic, plume, crayon; chocolats – bonbons; argent – euros, monnaie, sous*, however it should be pointed out that *agent* was a common error and was rejected as it has a quite different meaning. The picture of the bag stimulated a range of possibilities, apart from the obvious *sac: cartable, portefeuille, serviette, trousse, valise*. Candidates are reminded that there is no requirement to include a definite / indefinite article.

## Question 2 *La nourriture à l'école*

### Communication

One mark is awarded for each relevant detail. It is a requirement that candidates use a verb for each piece of information in order to gain a mark. Up to 10 marks are awarded across the question. There is no requirement to provide the same amount of information for each task, however candidates should be advised that marks for Communication are awarded only to information directly required by the tasks.

Candidates are also reminded that the maximum of 10 marks for Communication cannot be accessed if they omit a task.

For the first task, candidates were required to give details of a typical lunch. Most were able to state what they normally ate, using a structure such as *je mange* or *il y a*. Marks were also awarded to those who mentioned the time of their usual lunch break: *je mange à midi*. The vast majority of candidates gained at least one mark here.

The second task invited an opinion about lunch at school, particularly about price, quality and the canteen itself. Many Candidates gained three or more marks, such was the range of detail provided. Comments about price included: *c'est très cher / trop cher, ça coûte beaucoup*. Comments about the quality of meals varied from the general: *il y a beaucoup de choix*, including some quite sophisticated language: *il n'y a pas beaucoup de choses à manger, on propose toujours des choses différentes à manger*, to more specific detail *le repas est bon, la nourriture n'est pas bonne, j'aime la salade, je déteste le poisson*. Information about the canteen included the size: *la cantine est grande, il y a beaucoup de chaises pour les étudiants*, the decor: *la cantine est laide*. Further remarks about the experience of eating in the canteen were also rewarded: *j'aime manger à la cantine avec mes amis, c'est très bruyant dans la cantine, il y a trop d'étudiants*.

Provided that a verb was used to convey each new idea, candidates could gain a significant number of marks.

Some candidates in small schools commented that they did not have a canteen; they were rewarded for such information and for saying where they ate: *je mange dans la salle de classe, on mange dans le jardin*.

Candidates had to provide specific details of what they liked to eat for the third task. This information was conveyed in various ways: *j'aime manger la salade, je préfère le poulet avec le riz, le sandwich au fromage est mon favori, la pizza est très bien*.

There was a significant minority who did not read or understand what was required here. They appeared to think that the task was **Est-ce que vous aimez manger à l'école?** No marks were awarded to such information.

The final task was the most challenging as it required candidates to convey some notion of future time. Firstly, they needed to identify what they would like to change and to explain why. It is important to understand however that marks could be gained for appropriate reasons even if the first element was not successfully communicated.

Some candidates were able to respond effectively, ideas such as the following were quite common: *je voudrais changer les boissons, je voudrais avoir plus de légumes, j'aimerais changer le prix*. Frequently, candidates were a little clumsy in adapting the stimulus e.g. *je voudrais chager au menu la viande*, however the intended idea was conveyed and marks were awarded.

It was interesting to note how often candidates explained their reason for the change, with references to healthy eating e.g. *les frites ne sont pas bonnes pour la santé, parce qu'il y a trop d'huile, car les légumes sont bons pour la santé, parce que les boissons gazeuses sont trop sucrées*. Other reasons which gained marks included: *car je n'aime pas le poisson, parce que je ne mange pas le bœuf, j'adore le fastfood, la cuisine italienne est très bonne*.

As has been mentioned above, it is important that candidates read the question carefully before beginning their answers. It was evident that a small number saw the word *école* in the rubric and assumed that they should provide a range of general detail about school. This was unfortunate because it was clear from the quality of language used that these candidates had a fair measure of control of basic structure but the information provided was irrelevant and could not be rewarded.

## Accuracy

Very many gained full marks. The writing did not need to be error free for the award of 5 marks; candidates who use simple structures, who can correctly form verbs and who check their work can readily access the top bands.

## Section 2

### Question 3(a) *Un nouvel appareil photo*

This was the most popular choice with a little more than 40% opting for it. Candidates found it quite easy to earn high marks for the communication element. Some however would have done a little better if they had studied carefully the question before beginning their response: some candidates understood that they had received a photograph and not a camera; there were others who were not able to express the idea of taking photographs, despite the clues provided in the rubric.

## Communication

The first task invited candidates to explain why they liked the gift of a camera. Answers ranged from the very simple *il est bien* to *il est ma couleur favorite* to more sophisticated opinions such as *parce que la photographie est ma passion, parce que la marque est une marque excellente*. It has been suggested that candidates should employ the same tense as used in the question: in this instance, both present tense and past tense verbs were rewarded if the Candidate conveyed the significance of the camera. Thus *l'appareil photo était très moderne et joli* gained both the available marks.

A past tense was required for the award of 2 marks for Task 2 which required a description of an excursion. Marks were awarded for the idea of where the Candidate went: *je suis allé à la montagne pour prendre des photos* and also for more descriptive detail: *l'excursion était magnifique, c'était très intéressant*. Some candidates used the opportunity to give additional information about the trip, with details of places visited and activities enjoyed. Although there was no further reward for this information in this category, it did allow candidates to gain marks for Verbs and Other Linguistic Features.

Candidates needed to use a past tense to earn both marks for Task 3. Candidates found it relatively easy to identify the subject photographed: *mes amis / ma famille / la nature / les animaux / les oiseaux / la montagne / les arbres / les fleurs / la ville*, however, there was less success in conveying the idea using a suitable verb form. Some chose the most effective way of communicating this idea by adapting the verb in the rubric: *j'ai photographié le château*. Candidates, familiar with the irregular verb *prendre*, expressed the idea thus: *j'ai pris une photo de la rivière* but those who used the incorrect *j'ai perdu* gained no reward. There was a considerable number who, possibly by analogy with the use of other modern technologies, used the verb *cliquer*: as this verb is never used in the context of photography, no marks were awarded.

In the final task, 2 marks were available for details of the photograph which the Candidate preferred and a further 2 marks were awarded for the reason given. Importantly, the marks for the explanation were awarded even if there was a lack of clarity regarding the preferred photograph. In fact, many successfully identified the photograph using a variety of structures: *je préfère la photo de ma famille, ma photo favorite est la photo de mon chien, la photo de mes amis est la meilleure, j'aime beaucoup la photo des montagnes*. There were a range of reasons for liking the picture chosen: *mon amie est très jolie, j'aime beaucoup ma famille, les couleurs sont bien, c'est la meilleure photo, mon ami est très heureux dans la photo*.

## Verbs

Candidates could and did answer this question using a range of common verbs. However, as has been mentioned, some candidates did not make good use of the help provided in the stimulus *photographier* and others did not know how to use the common irregular verb *prendre*.

There were opportunities for gaining ticks for verbs when describing the excursion: some produced *j'ai voyagé, nous sommes allés, j'ai visité, nous avons vu, nous avons mangé*.

It is quite challenging to produce 18 different verb forms. On this occasion, there were not many candidates who added extra detail using correct verb forms and who thus reached the top bands.



Some might have improved their scores if they had checked carefully their work, particularly in respect of accents and agreements on the past participles, the choice of auxiliary verb should always be thoroughly reviewed.

#### Other Linguistic Features

Candidates whose rather basic language had brought them a good mark for Communication scored relatively poorly in this section if they had not been able to use some more complex sentence patterns. There were opportunities for using varied and complex sentence patterns e.g. *J'aime l'appareil photo parce que la photo est ma passion; Je suis allé à la montagne où j'ai vu des animaux sauvages; Quand nous sommes allés au restaurant, j'ai pris une photo de ma famille; J'ai pris une photo des arbres qui étaient très jolis.*

#### Question 3(b) *L'environnement et moi!*

This question attracted about 30% of candidates. It was clear that the topic of the environment is one about which many young people feel passionate; there were some very interesting personal responses.

Whereas some had clearly encountered this area in their studies and were well able to convey their interest effectively, some who chose this were not at all able to communicate any significant detail.

As with option (a), there was some help in the rubric, not least the correct spelling of the word **environnement**, too frequently candidates wrote this in its English spelling.

#### Communication

The first task invited candidates to state how they had helped to protect the environment. A good proportion were able to use the help provided: *j'ai nettoyé les rues, j'ai recyclé les bouteilles en plastique, j'ai fait du jardinage*. Some were a little more adventurous in terms of the language used: *j'ai aidé l'association écologique à nettoyer la plage*.

There were a number who thought that the words provided were verbs: their responses did not meet the basic requirements for marks for Communication: *j'ai recyclagé du papier, j'ai jardinagé*.

It is important to remember to respond to each task using a new sentence or clause. The second task required candidates to state where they had done these activities. Those who responded with statements such as: *j'ai travaillé dans le jardin public, j'ai aidé l'association dans ma ville* or who gave a second detail in response to the first task which clearly identified the location of the work: *j'ai ramassé les déchets dans les rues de mon village* gained the 2 available marks. However, candidates who simply added a prepositional phrase e.g. *dans mon quartier, à mon école*, to the details for the first task gained no marks for this information.

It was interesting to note how many candidates were interested in the environment from their responses to the third task which was to explain why they would like to do this kind of work again. Any tense was acceptable here. Many different reasons were given: *je me suis beaucoup amusé, j'ai fait de nouveaux amis, j'ai rencontré beaucoup de personnes, j'ai appris beaucoup de choses, c'était vraiment intéressant, c'est important de recycler le papier, je voudrais travailler encore avec mes amis*.

The enthusiasm for protecting the environment was again evident in the responses to the fourth task which required candidates to explain why they wanted to be involved in such activities. Some gave a simple response such as: *c'est très important pour la planète, je veux protéger l'environnement pour ma famille*, whilst others were able to comment: *il y a trop de pollution dans ma ville, il y a beaucoup de voitures, la pollution est mauvaise pour la santé, les animaux sont en danger* some even claiming: *les gens sont sales, ils jettent les déchets dans les rues*.

The 2 marks for the final task were awarded for any supplementary piece of information offered in answer to any of the earlier tasks. Candidates know that they need to provide extra details in order to reach the recommended word count; some earned these marks for the additional details about what they did, whereas others gained them for a second reason for doing the work again or for why they want to protect the environment.

## Verbs

Candidates who chose this option because they felt confident about the relevant vocabulary demonstrated control of some of the following verbs in the past tense: *nettoyer, recycler, collecter, ramasser, gaspiller, réduire*.

As has been mentioned, it is quite a challenge to reach the top marks for correct verb forms. It might be helpful to encourage candidates to think of what range of relevant verbs they know which they can use in their answers before they make their final choice of question.

## Other Linguistic Features

As always, the correct use of basic vocabulary is critically important; uncertainty about the gender and spelling of common nouns will always have a limiting effect on the mark which can be awarded. The use of prepositions was occasionally insecure: *près de la ville, à côté de la mer, en face du collège* are patterns which good candidates should have mastered.

What was especially pleasing to see here was the familiarity with the technical vocabulary needed. Many candidates confidently used a range of relevant nouns e.g. *poubelle, déchets, pollution, plastique, embouteillage*.

For mark in the top bands, candidates must demonstrate not only accuracy in simple sentence structures but also range in terms of complex patterns. There were opportunities to do that here: *Quand j'ai aidé l'association, j'ai nettoyé la plage; Si on ne protège pas l'environnement, nous serons malades; Je veux protéger l'environnement parce que la planète va mourir*.

### Question 3(c) 24 heures très fatigantes!

This was a slightly less popular choice, attracting about 25% of the entry. In some respects it was a little more demanding in that it placed a heavy emphasis on the consistent use of past tenses and it required candidates to use first person, singular and plural, and third person verbs, which was not necessarily the case for options (a) and (b).

## Communication

Candidates were mostly able to give a detail about the circumstances which led to them looking after their cousin: *mon oncle et ma tante sont partis en vacances, ma tante est allée à Paris pour son travail, mes parents et mon oncle ont visité ma grandmère qui était à l'hôpital, mon oncle et ma tante sont allés à un anniversaire, ma tante était malade*.

The second task required information about an activity which the Candidate and the cousin did together. For the majority, this was quite straightforward: *nous avons regardé un film à la télé, on a joué au foot dans le jardin, j'ai fait une promenade avec mon cousin dans le parc*. Candidates who did not respond to the idea of *ensemble* did not access the 2 marks.

Many candidates provided two or three details of how they spent the time together. There were no extra Communication marks for these but it did mean that they used a variety of different verb forms which could boost the marks for Verbs. In this style of question, it is always important to seek opportunities for providing additional relevant information.

The third task invited candidates to explain why they were tired after looking after the cousin. There were some who misunderstood, thinking that they were required to say whether or not they were tired. This task also revealed a lack of understanding of the difference between *fatigué* and *fatigant*. The abler candidates succeeded in conveying an appropriate idea: *j'étais très fatigué parce que je n'ai pas beaucoup mangé, parce que nous avons joué toute la journée, c'était fatigant parce que mon petit cousin est très actif, parce que mon cousin était méchant, parce que j'ai dû nettoyer la maison, car la journée était très longue*.

As is the regular pattern for this option, the final task invited reactions to the events. It was important however to be precise, with information about the reaction of the cousin as well as that of the Candidate. A response such as *c'était amusant / difficile* was regarded as sufficient for the Candidate's reaction, as of course were the more specific: *je me suis amusé(e), j'étais content(e), je voudrais faire cela encore*, just as were summative comments about the cousin: *ma cousine était méchante, mon cousin n'était pas gentil*. References to the cousin's reaction included: *mon cousin était heureux, ma cousine a aimé la journée, mon cousin s'est amusé, ma cousine a pleuré*.

## Verbs

The heavy reliance on past tenses to convey the story effectively put a strain on a few of the candidates who chose this option: *ma tante allée, nous joué, mon cousin regardé* represent common errors. These types of errors could have been corrected.

There was plenty of opportunity to score well here, as candidates were free to direct the account of the day's activities, so they could mention familiar activities for which they knew the verbs: *j'ai joué avec mon cousin, nous avons mangé une glace, nous sommes allés au parc, j'ai préparé des sandwiches, nous avons visité la plage*, were typical of the details given.

## Other Linguistic Features

Candidates should aim to be consistent: careful revision of work will always be beneficial. An example in this instance lay in the gender of the cousin. In some accounts, the same person was referred to as *mon cousin/ma cousin/ma cousine/mon cousine* and it was also noted that *mon cousin* was later identified as *mon frère* in some pieces of work.

It was interesting to note how many candidates ordered their accounts using a series of time phrases e.g. *à dix heures, l'après-midi, plus tard, ensuite, à la fin de la journée*, and conjunctions: *donc, alors*. These improved the style and variety of the writing as well as adding interest to the account.

There were some who used subordinate clauses: *ma petite cousine qui s'appelle Michal / qui a six ans, quand nous sommes rentrés à la maison, parce qu'elle était fatiguée*. It was also pleasing to see that candidates were able to use object pronouns correctly: *mon cousin m'a demandé, je lui ai donné*.

The (c) option does provide candidates who have a good range of linguistic skill, the opportunity to show fully what they know; they have the freedom to develop the story within the guidelines of the rubric and can, with careful planning, incorporate a range of familiar vocabulary and sentence structure.