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FIRST LANGUAGE CHINESE

Paper 0509/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

The overall performance of the candidates was satisfactory and the vast majority were able to demonstrate their ability to communicate and substantiate arguments in Chinese. Examiners would like to remind candidates that answers should be written in black or blue ink and not in pencil or brightly coloured ink.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Question 1

Candidates' performance in this section of the examination was comparable to that of previous years. Examiners are pleased to report that most candidates were able to write fluently and convincingly. Disappointingly, some candidates chose to ignore the question and/or the texts and could not score highly.

Section 2

Question 2

Most candidates did very well in this section and had a lot to say about the issues raised. A number wrote a letter instead of the required speech: candidates should read questions carefully and ensure they do precisely as instructed.

Candidates should also be reminded of the importance of planning their work to ensure a smooth flow of ideas. Too many adopted the approach of bombarding the reader with ideas, which s/he had to sort out, when a little time spent organising the material would have resulted in a much more successful piece of writing.

Section 3

Questions 3-7

Satisfactory performance by the majority of candidates.

Questions 8-9

These two questions proved quite challenging to most candidates. In **Question 9**, many candidates copied substantial portions of the original sentence, making it unclear to Examiners whether or not they could identify the adjectives. In such cases no marks could be awarded.

Paper 0509/03
Continuous Writing

General comments

In most cases, candidates wrote essays that were appropriate, detailed and which included plenty of examples. Much of the work produced was interesting to read and in some cases it was moving. However, at the other end of the scale, essays bore little relation to the title or were so long and rambling that it was hard for the reader to maintain any level of interest.

Although in general the overall structure of the candidates' compositions was good, with adequate paragraphing and many examples of good beginnings and endings, in many cases there was room for improvement. Teachers should remind candidates of the valuable role planning can play in ensuring that work is appropriately structured. Narratives require careful planning to ensure that introductions are not too long and that candidates have the time to build up the atmosphere and reach a dramatic climax. Endings, which can be the most effective point of a story, were often rushed as a result of poor planning. In discursive writing, the plan is also essential and can avoid the unfortunate tendency for arguments to go round in confusing circles. Where appropriate, a simple, but effective structure can be for candidates to organise their views into two sections, roughly 'for and against'.

In the best answers, a strong sense of audience was apparent. Writing was clear and fluent with good use of varied vocabulary and a clear desire to engage the interest of the reader. At the other end of the scale, it appeared that little thought had gone into the writing, which was rambling and monotonous.

Accuracy is another possible area for improvement. Although the majority of candidates showed competence in word usage, grammar, character correctness and punctuation, there were too many who did not seem to be aware that these form the basis of any sound piece of writing. In the worst examples, faulty language and inappropriate use of punctuation meant that whole sections of the work produced were difficult to understand, if not incomprehensible.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Candidates were required to write about their ambitions in what was one of the most popular questions in this examination. As usual, the most successful essays were those with a strong personal element.

Question 2

Candidates were provided with a well-known Chinese saying and they were asked to explain and exemplify it. This was a fairly popular choice and there were many pleasing accounts based on candidates' personal experiences or their knowledge of history.

Question 3

'A strange dream' proved a popular topic. Weaker attempts tended to consist of a series of events with no attempt to provide a context.

Question 4

Another popular question. Candidates were expected to write an article for their local paper expressing their opinion on the effect of television programmes on teenagers. This was a good example of a question where lack of planning often resulted in essays which failed to fully explore the issues.

Question 5

Candidates seemed to enjoy writing about the person they feared the most.

Question 6

The most interesting responses to this famous Chinese phrase were firmly rooted in candidates' experiences. Weaker candidates frequently failed to focus on the question or developed a single point, namely that one cannot be successful without hard work.

Question 7

This was the most popular title in the examination and the subject matter, the pros and cons of playing computer games, was clearly something many candidates had strong views about. There were some extremely interesting answers where candidates were able to organise their ideas so as to produce a clear and convincing argument.

Question 8

Not a popular topic.

Question 9

A reasonable number of candidates chose to write an article or story relating to a well-known Chinese saying. They adopted a wide variety of approaches, some more successful than others.