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FOREIGN LANGUAGE FRENCH

Paper 0520/01

Listening

General comments

The Paper was of a similar standard to last year's Paper and the standard of candidate response was, as last year, most encouraging. There was a full spread of marks and the majority of candidates scored well over half marks. They displayed high levels of competence in both specific and general comprehension tasks.

Candidates had generally been well prepared for the examination and understood rubrics; there were only a few candidates who ticked the non-requisite number of boxes. In the majority of cases, candidates attempted all 3 sections. Weak candidates who attempt the final section, but do not do well, are not penalised.

On questions requiring answers in French, long answers/full sentences were not required. Answers were marked for communication of message – accuracy was only an issue if the clarity of the message was in doubt. Answers written in languages other than French were ignored.

The extracts heard, featured both formal and informal language in a variety of topics and settings, as set out in the syllabus. **Section 1** questions were based on Areas A, B and C of the Defined Content and tested vocabulary items which can be found in the Defined Content.

Finally, it is worth reminding candidates that they must not write in pencil. Some persist in so doing. Please instruct candidates to write in blue or black ink.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1 - 8

This exercise tested the comprehension of short conversations. The question type used was multiple choice. The exercise was generally well answered. The most difficult question was found to be **Question 8** where **D** was selected rather than **B**.

Exercise 2 Questions 9 - 15

Candidates found this exercise slightly easier than the equivalent exercise last year. There were many accessible items for genuine Core candidates. The extract heard was a conversation based on tourist accommodation and activities. Candidates were required to tick boxes and complete notes. Very occasionally, candidates did not tick the required number of boxes. It is worth pointing out to candidates that on this exercise they will often be required to tick more than one box. They should check how many boxes they are required to tick in reading time and use a pen to underline the number so they do not overlook it when they come to answer the question.

Questions 9 - 12 and **14** were well done by all candidates. However, weaker candidates found **Questions 13** and **15** more challenging. In **Question 13**, the number of euros (80 and 60) proved difficult for some and in **Question 15**, **A** and **D** were frequently chosen rather than **A** and **C**.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 16

Candidates heard 4 people talking about friends and the importance of friendship. The topic was very accessible. Candidates were required to tick 6 boxes out of 12. Many scored at least 4 marks and there were pleasing numbers scoring 5 or 6 marks. Only a small number ticked more than 6 boxes.

Exercise 2 Questions 17 - 24

In this interview, candidates heard an interview with a strip-cartoon artist. The exercise required candidates to give short answers in French and true Core candidates clearly found this the most demanding exercise. As last year, only a few failed to answer in French, but there was occasional interference from Spanish and English on some answers. In **Question 17**, *bon/bonne dessinée* was often given by candidates, and other incorrect answers featured *actrice* or *dessinatrice*. *BD* was deemed quite acceptable. On **Question 18**, candidates generally coped well and managed to convey the concept that she gets up at the same time as her son, goes to the studio and comes home at 18:00. Some candidates invalidated answers by putting *frère* or *filles*. Surprisingly, candidates found the word *fil* difficult to spell. On **Question 19**, weaker candidates misread *Qui?* and wrote confusing answers such as *les vivres des enfants* which did not convey a clear message. *Les enfants* was adequate for the mark. On **Question 20**, some lost a mark by writing *va au café*. **Question 21** was answered well and nearly everybody managed *voitures* in **Question 22**. **Question 23** was a good test of listening at this level and candidates were required to indicate *gros nez*. Answers such as *gronet* were not credited. On **Question 24**, an answer which indicated going to the festival/getting on the train gained the mark.

Section 3

Exercise 1 Questions 25 - 29

Candidates heard an interview with a young man, Samuel, on the subject of *les sports de glisse*. Candidates were required to tick one box only and understood this rubric well. Visuals were used on **Question 28**. **Question 26** was found to be the most difficult, but most appropriately entered Extended candidates did well, scoring at least 3 marks.

Exercise 2 Questions 30 - 39

As last year, this was a suitably demanding final exercise, with **Questions 34** and **35** challenging the most able candidates. Again, long answers were not necessary and it is worth warning candidates that overlong answers which include unnecessary detail can sometimes distort or invalidate the correct part of the answer. **Question 30** was generally well answered, but surprisingly few could spell *août* correctly – *aut* and *oot* were accepted. On **Question 31**, *jeunes* and *gens* were frequently confused and only the better candidates correctly picked out the notion of *aide*. On **Question 32**, for a mark of 2, the notion of *construire* was necessary plus which buildings: most candidates scored at least one mark. On **Question 33**, answers such as *les difficultés à l'école* did not gain the mark as the question asked what was needed. Answers such as *relever leur niveau scolaire* and *cours de vacances* were acceptable. **Question 34** was demanding and incorrect answers such as *il n'y a pas de différences* were frequently seen. The required notion was *les différences sont une richesse*. **Question 35** was correctly answered by the best candidates who managed to express notions such as being useful in a world dominated by money or showing that money is not important. On **Question 36**, most candidates offered an acceptable spelling of *enthousiastes*, far fewer attempted the more difficult *accueillants*. On **Question 37**, *sac de couchage* was often misspelt and *produit anti-moustique* was often rendered as *produit optimistique*. *Leur portable* was often misheard as *l'eau potable*, which was at least a good guess given the context. On **Question 38**, many scored an easy mark for *stylos* or *cahiers*, but *livres* invalidated the answer.

Finally, **Question 39** was a very good final question which required careful listening to select the right answer as reference was made to several emotions. The correct answer required a reference to the notion of sadness.

Paper 0520/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

The general performance was better than in previous years. Examiners commented on the number of very strong performances and the high proportion of candidates ending up with above average scores.

The vast majority of candidates showed an excellent understanding of the reading passages and were able to write quite coherently. All but the very weakest candidates coped well with **Sections 1** and **2**, with a good number achieving full marks in these sections. Nearly all candidates attempted **Section 3**. This final section proved more challenging, as intended, and a wider range of achievement was in evidence here.

Once again, Examiners commented on how well candidates had been prepared for this examination.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1 - 5

Full marks were achieved here by a large majority of candidates. Difficulties occasionally occurred in **Questions 2** and **5** where some candidates did not know *robinet* and *repassage*.

Exercise 2 Questions 6 - 10

Well answered. A very large majority scored full marks. Where mistakes occurred, these were mostly in answer to **Question 7** – possibly due to a misunderstanding of *gratuit* in the text.

Exercise 3 Questions 11 - 15

Again, very well answered on the whole. Most candidates had no problem with this exercise.

Exercise 4 Question 16

The majority of candidates were able to score full marks on this exercise and even weaker candidates were able to score 3 Communication marks.

However, some candidates failed to fulfil task (c). Often, these were candidates who could easily have completed the task, but missed it through lack of attention to the rubric. Others may have felt they did not have the vocabulary to be able to attempt it.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17 - 24

This exercise was extremely well answered by almost all candidates – a vast majority scoring full marks here.

The only common error was in answers to **Question 18**, where a few candidates wrote *il répétait les questions*.

Exercise 2 Question 25

On the whole, candidates understood the rubric very well and most were well able to offer a substantial answer, with very few failing to attempt it at all and only a few missing out the last task, *Imaginez que vous avez plus d'argent de poche. Que faites-vous avec cet argent?* Again, Examiners felt this was due to a lack of attention to the rubric rather than to an inability to answer the question.

Examiners were impressed by the fact that a very large number of candidates would give money to a variety of charities, mostly charities dedicated to helping the homeless and hospitals. Nevertheless, it is worth reminding candidates that they may use their imagination in the writing tasks. Many missed out on Communication marks by limiting themselves to *Je ne sais pas ce que je fais si j'ai beaucoup d'argent* or *J'ai assez maintenant. Je ne veux pas plus* in response to the last task.

A very large majority scored full marks for accuracy. However, it is worth reminding candidates that accents are important in French as some did not use any.

Section 3

This proved to be a more challenging section for many candidates.

Exercise 1 Questions 26 - 31

This exercise was well answered on the whole. Most candidates attempted the *Vrail/Faux* even if a few candidates then forgot (or chose not) to correct the false statement.

Questions 26 and 30 were correctly answered by almost all candidates. The most common error occurred in **Question 27**, where candidates did not notice that the question was about *Le Parlement des adultes* and answered with *les députés juniors filles sont en nombre supérieur aux garçons*.

Exercise 2 Questions 32 - 39

As intended, this exercise provided good discrimination and only good to very good candidates scored very high marks. However, although some candidates clearly found it challenging, nearly all were able to have a try. Unfortunately, too often, weaker candidates simply lifted large chunks of material from the text in the hope that the Examiner would extract the correct answer from what they had written, and could not be rewarded as there was no evidence they had understood the question or the text.

Questions 33, 36 and 39 were well answered by a majority of candidates. **Question 32** proved difficult with only a few candidates mentioning the important points: the victim is younger (or the aggressor older) and the use of force/violence. In **Question 34**, some candidates struggled with the object pronoun and as a result implied that Luc's parents would be picked on and not him.

Paper 0520/03

Speaking

General comments

This Paper was common to all candidates who had followed both a Core Curriculum and an Extended Curriculum course. The full range of marks was available to all candidates and, as in 2002, a wide range of performance was heard by Moderators.

Generally, the candidature displayed very pleasing communication skills. Moderators often commented on the enthusiasm of candidates. Overall, the standard heard was very similar to that of last year.

Administration

This year, unfortunately, Moderators reported that the administration in some Centres caused problems. Some Centres failed to submit working mark sheets and the incidence of clerical errors/incorrect transcription of marks was more frequent this year. Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to check all additions and transcriptions carefully to ensure candidates are not disadvantaged. Centres are also reminded to ensure that all tapes are clearly labelled.

Quality of recording

In most Centres, this was good. There were, however, several cases this year of excessive background noise, machine noise or virtual inaudibility. Please ensure that microphones, if used, and cassette recorders are thoroughly tested before the examination, in the room where the test will take place. Centres are reminded that it is the Examiner who should identify each candidate with his/her name and candidate number. Candidates should not be required to identify themselves.

Preparation

One regrettable factor, more in evidence this year than in previous years, was the lack of preparation on the part of some Examiners prior to the test. It is crucial that Examiners prepare the Role plays and are familiar with the roles they will play in the test. An unprepared Examiner can disadvantage candidates and can sometimes miss out tasks or give the wrong cues. Several Examiners seemed to be unaware that there were 3 parts to the test and sometimes omitted either the Topic/Discussion or the General Conversation. As a result, candidates were disadvantaged, as they cannot be awarded marks for parts of the text they do not attempt.

Timing

Timing was usually good in Centres, but there were several instances of very short or very long conversation sections. Please note that the whole test should take approximately 15 minutes.

Application of the mark scheme

Generally, marking in Centres was close to the agreed standard and where adjustments were necessary, these were usually small. Some Centres did however have larger adjustments and this was usually due to one of the following:

- Short Topic/Discussion and General Conversation sections (these should each last approximately 5 minutes).
- In both the Topic/Discussion and General Conversation sections, candidates must be given the opportunity to use past, present and future time frames. Candidates who, for whatever reason, do not demonstrate the ability to use a variety of time frames cannot score more than 6 marks on Scale (b) (linguistic quality).
- Failure to complete all the tasks in the Role plays – please see comments above regarding Examiner preparation.

Most Examiners marked consistently across the range and this is important. It can pose problems to Moderators if marking is inconsistent. It is to this end that one Examiner only should be used per Centre. If more than one Examiner is used in larger Centres, internal moderation between Examiners must take place and a common standard of marking must be applied across all candidates. The sample submitted should cover the work of all Examiners.

Comments on specific questions

'A' Role plays

Centres are reminded to encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each task. Examiners must keep to the tasks that appear on the Role play cards as these are the tasks for which marks can be awarded. If only one part of a task is completed, only 1 mark can be awarded.

As last year, the **A** Role plays were perceived to be of equal difficulty and a fair test at this level. They are designed to be easier than the **B** Role plays and are set using the vocabulary and topics from the Defined Content, Areas A, B and C. Generally, candidates found them accessible and even the weakest candidates were often able to score at least 1 mark per task. Candidates should be reminded to greet and/or thank when instructed to do so on the Role play card, as there will be marks available for fulfilling these parts of a task.

At the café

Candidates coped well with these tasks. **Task 4** was approached in a variety of ways – all equally acceptable. Weaker candidates found **Task 4** hard, but most coped well in formulating an appropriate question on **Task 5**.

In the tourist office

Several questions were required in these tasks, but they were straightforward and accessible to candidates. **Task 4**, (asking what was on the menu) proved to be more challenging for weaker candidates.

At the chemist's

This was coped with well by candidates. Parts of the body were known and most could give 2 symptoms. Short responses such as *depuis hier* were quite acceptable for a mark of 3 in **Task 4**.

'B' Role plays

These Role plays were more demanding and required the ability to use different time frames and to give explanations and justifications where necessary.

The cards were seen to be equally balanced in terms of difficulty, each having its easier and more challenging tasks. Many Examiners split longer tasks which is appropriate, and there were some good natural performances.

Please remind candidates to read the settings for these Role plays as they provide a contextualising framework.

Phoning to say you will be late

Candidates coped well with the first task, but found it hard to conjugate *se disputer* in **Task 2**. Explanations for the argument were done well in **Task 3**, but in **Task 4** some candidates did not apologise. **Task 5** was usually done well.

At the restaurant

Candidates coped well with **Tasks 2, 3** and **5**. Descriptions of the jacket were good and most could say where it was last seen. **Task 1**, however, did cause problems as some candidates had not understood the use of *vol* in the rubric and then said they had stolen their own jacket or *ma vest vole*. Only the best candidates could explain why it was difficult to pay in **Task 4**.

Changing holiday plans

The importance of reading the setting carefully was highlighted again, as some candidates thought the friend was moving. **Tasks 2** and **3** were usually done well – nearly all candidates could say when they were due to leave and where they would be living. In **Task 5** some candidates found it difficult to say when and how future contact would be made.

Topic/discussion

As in 2002, an interesting range of topics was heard. Most Examiners, correctly, stopped candidates after a minute or so and then asked questions. The best examining sounded natural and not over rehearsed and elicited spontaneous responses from candidates. Candidates had generally chosen appropriate topics such as holidays, free time, school, ambitions. Some, however, did choose rather ambitious topics which then proved difficult to discuss. Pleasingly, there were very few examples of *moi-même*, a topic choice to be avoided as it can pre-empt General Conversation material.

Overall, candidate performance covered a full range. There were some very fluent expositions and the better performances were frequently those in which the Examiner's questions gave opportunities to use past and future tenses.

General conversation

As in the Topic/Discussion, a wide range of performance was heard and the best performances featured a variety of tenses and a good range of structures and vocabulary. Examiners correctly covered at least 2 or 3 topics and there were some pleasing natural conversations, not just of a factual nature, but genuine interchanges during which opinions and explanations also emerged.

Moderators commented on the unique nature of this candidature and the interesting content of this section of the test. Although candidates were generally well prepared, Centres are reminded not to exceed 5 minutes in this part of the test – 5 minutes is adequate to assess a candidate's strengths.

<p>Paper 0520/04 Continuous Writing</p>

General comments

The quality of work overall continues to impress Examiners. Most candidates approached the Paper with enthusiasm and imagination and the best were able to display a wide knowledge of vocabulary, idiom and structure which they employed with a good degree of accuracy.

Centres are, once again, advised that marks for Communication will be lost if candidates fail to observe the requirements of the rubric. No credit can be gained, for Language or Communication, by material which occurs after the 140 word limit. Candidates should be advised to start their answers with the aim of completing the tasks set out on the Question Paper. Every year candidates fail to gain marks because they become sidetracked in lengthy descriptions in the early part of their answers and fail to address all the tasks within the word limit.

Although the standard of presentation was usually quite good, most Examiners commented on the poor quality of handwriting and layout on some scripts. While Examiners will give the benefit of the doubt wherever possible, illegible work cannot be rewarded.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

The majority of candidates opted for **(a)**, the letter to a school describing school life and the programme for a planned visit. This was a familiar topic for which most had the necessary vocabulary. Some excellent work was produced in answer to **(b)**, but some weaker candidates lacked the language skills to cope with the demands of writing about a projected shopping centre. It might have been wiser for these candidates to choose option **(a)**. It is always worth the candidate's while to spend a little time considering which option is best suited to his/her knowledge of vocabulary.

(a) *The school visit*

The best answers gave a personal account of school life, including preferences and an interesting account of the intended visit. Nearly all seemed to enjoy their schools and wrote in very glowing terms of their teachers, the school meals, the facilities and the accommodation (as many declared themselves to be boarders). Making friendships was given the top priority by many and one often read about the warm and friendly atmosphere in schools which favoured good relations between staff and pupils. Better answers went on to detail the planned tour of the premises, the opportunity to sit in lessons with their new friends, inter school sports events and the use of swimming pools. They ended by expressing eager anticipation of the visit.

Letters were normally addressed to the group and were written in appropriately familiar register. A minority were sent to the Head Teacher and addressed him/her inappropriately as *tu* and closed with *Amitiés* or even *Bisous*. Candidates should be reminded to use the formal *vous* when addressing an adult they may not know and the plural *vous* when addressing a group, as in this case. Also, that the formal and informal beginnings and endings of letters are important and should be used appropriately.

This question offered even the weakest candidates the chance to make elementary comments about school and accrue Communication marks. They were able to give details of the school timetable, the uniform and the subjects they studied. Some took *la vie scolaire* to be simply the school day and began by saying when they woke up, what they had for breakfast, when they caught the bus etc which was of only marginal relevance. Others went to great lengths to describe the daily routine, often using the same phrases repeatedly and putting in clock times at every opportunity. This was not well rewarded in terms of Language marks and led the candidates to reach the 140 word limit before they had the chance to tackle the final task, the programme for the visit, which was after all the main reason for writing the letter. Many did not read the rubric carefully enough and did not notice that there were two parts to the second task, what one liked most about school and why. (*J'aime surtout le sport parce que...* .) Two Communication marks were available for the task. Many simply said '*J'aime l'école parce que...*' and forfeited a mark.

This question did not make rigorous linguistic demands and most of it could be answered in the present tense. The final task (the proposed visit) did require a future context and not all were able to handle this. Vocabulary was within the scope of most of the entry, although a minority did not have even the basic words such as 'break', 'lesson' and 'subject', and *professeur* was commonly misspelled. As with the other questions, many marks were lost through careless errors of agreement, gender, verb form and spelling.

(b) *Letter to a newspaper about a projected new shopping centre*

This question did require a more imaginative response and better candidates rose to the challenge. Many welcomed the news of the coming *centre commercial* as it would make shopping more convenient, create jobs, bring people into the area, offer leisure facilities and benefit the local economy. On the other hand, they said, the streets would be blocked with increased traffic, pollution would follow and young people would hang around and create a nuisance(!). Parks and areas of natural beauty would be destroyed. Children's play areas would be lost and the building period would be a cause of disruption for the whole community. Despite all the negative aspects, our candidates usually thought it was a good idea anyway, because they loved to shop. Some thought it was an excellent project, but please could they build it somewhere else?

The advantages and disadvantages were often well expressed, but problems occurred with uncertainty over tenses. The *centre* was not yet built so it was inappropriate to write about it in the present tense. *Il y a beaucoup de trafic* for instance failed to score for Communication and the verb too failed to score. The more discerning recognised the need for future or conditional tenses and used them as appropriate. The last task (*votre opinion*) was often included after the 140 word limit or, surprisingly, omitted altogether.

The same problems with letter etiquette occurred as in **(a)**. The letter to the local paper needs a formal register and should begin and end with conventional *formules*. Better candidates were familiar with these usages, but many weaker ones wrote to the paper as if they were writing to a friend.

The demands on verb usage were more stringent than in **(a)**, but there were some excellent answers and many showed an impressive knowledge of the vocabulary of urban life.

Question 2

The school trip

As usual, the quality of work often declined when candidates moved to a more open-ended question, but this was not always the case. Some highly entertaining pieces were received, full of ideas and expressed in fluent French.

The *voyage scolaire* was usually understood, but a minority wrote about a family holiday, overlooking the 'school' element. A few did not include a journey at all. Most could find something to say under all three elements of the rubric and marks for Communication were high. *Ce que vous avez fait* was 'where we went', 'what we saw' or 'what we endured'. *Vos reactions* were usually well expressed, being feelings of shock, horror at the dreadful accidents which occurred or disgust at the poor conditions which confronted them on the trip.

Most, but not all, understood they were to write about an unsuccessful excursion. A number wrote a fairly stock piece about a school trip they really enjoyed apart from a small incident at the end which may have put a damper on things.

There was a rich variety of chosen subject matter. Trips went wrong through bad planning (usually the teachers were to blame), appalling traffic accidents, lost property, inadequate accommodation, horrible weather and, especially, bad food. Many were taken on improving, educational trips to galleries and museums which were unspeakably boring. Others were taken on camping or outward bound holidays which they found exhausting, boring and distasteful. The great outdoors clearly has little appeal to many youngsters though their teachers insist on the benefits of such experiences. The final task, *mauvais souvenirs*, was misunderstood by some who thought they must have bought some bad souvenirs. Fortunately, marks were not always lost for this as the article contained enough 'bad memories' already for the Communication mark to be awarded.

Much imagination went into the best answers and Examiners commend the use of colourful language and the impressive range of language skills which were displayed. More able candidates showed contrasting perfect, imperfect and pluperfect tenses, much use of subordinate clauses of varied kinds, rich and varied vocabulary and an ability to express opinions and to justify them. Weaker candidates struggled of course with past tenses, especially with *être* verbs and reflexives. They had problems with spelling, gender, adjectival and past participle agreements and especially object pronouns. Having said that, even those with only modest linguistic ability were usually able to muster enough French to answer the question in an appropriate way, which was much to the credit of those who prepared them for the examination.