

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/01

Listening

General comments

Overall, the November 2006 paper proved to be of a similar standard to the 2005 paper and as usual Examiners were impressed by the quality of the work produced by many candidates in the examination. A full spread of marks was seen by Examiners and particularly encouraging was the large number of candidates scoring well over half marks and displaying pleasing levels of competence in both specific and general comprehension tasks.

Most candidates were familiar with the requirements of the paper in terms of rubrics and question types and they had been well prepared in Centres. However, as last year, a small number of candidates in a few Centres persisted in ticking more than the required number of boxes (6) in **Section 2 Exercise 1**. Candidates should be reminded to read all instructions carefully.

On questions requiring answers in French, the accuracy of the French was not taken into account unless the meaning was obscured. Answers in any language other than French were ignored.

Candidates should be reminded not to use pencil when answering questions. They should use blue or black ink. Incorrect answers which are not to be marked by Examiners should be clearly crossed out by candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8

This initial exercise tested the comprehension of short extracts. The question type used was multiple choice with visual options. **Questions 1 and 2** were, surprisingly, not answered well by candidates. This could have been partly due to the 'settling in' factor at the beginning of the examination and perhaps the nature of the visual on **Question 1**, as the French in the extract heard by candidates was not complex. **Questions 3-8** were well understood and responded to by candidates, although **B** was a popular incorrect choice for **Question 5**. Also, on **Question 6**, *faire la vaisselle* was not well understood by some candidates.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-16

This exercise was well done by candidates. **Question 9** proved to be very easy with nearly all candidates answering correctly. Numbers were generally coped with and nearly all could correctly render *lundi* on **Question 12**. On **Question 14**, many invalidated their answer by writing *joue(s) électronique(s)*.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Question 17

Candidates heard four young people talking about living at school as an *interne*. A pleasing number of candidates coped well with this exercise, usually managing 4 or 5 correct answers, though scores did cover the whole range from 0 to 6. The main mistakes were to opt for **j** or **k** as one of the boxes to be ticked and to fail to tick boxes **c** or **g**. As mentioned above, a small number of candidates penalised themselves by ticking more than the required 6 boxes.

Exercise 2 Part 1 – Questions 18-22

This was a successful exercise in that candidates clearly understood what they had to do and often scored at least 3 of the 5 available marks. Candidates heard a young student, Anna, with dual nationality talking about her life. On **Question 18**, *cuisine* was allowed for the mark, but the correct answer of *cuisinier* was not well spelt, and it was clearly not well known by some candidates. In **Question 19**, the spelling of *espagnole* caused difficulties, but many were successful in their attempt to get the message across. **Question 20** was the least well answered question, but even so there were many successful attempts. The mark was awarded for either *richesse* or *chance*. **Question 22** was well answered by most who clearly understood the concept of *voyager*.

Exercise 2 Part 2 – Questions 23-26

On the second part of this exercise, candidates had to respond to questions in French, but this did not always necessitate writing a full sentence. Weaker students found it difficult to express themselves in French, but, generally, the questions were accessible. **Question 23** required the concept that Miguel was amusing/funny or that he made Anna laugh. Some failed to score the mark because incorrect subject pronouns rendered the message unclear, e.g. *Elle fait rire*. On **Question 24**, a reference to dual nationality was required and was usually well attempted. On **Question 25**, some failed to score the mark as they confused *ville* with *village* or wrote *village de la mer*: such renderings changed the concept and could therefore not be accepted. **Question 26** proved to be the most difficult in this section. The required concept was that it helped Anna's understanding of the language or that it was for her understanding of the language. Answers which stated that she could learn whilst enjoying herself were awarded the mark.

Section 3

Centres are reminded that in 2007 all candidates will be required to attempt this final section of the Listening paper.

Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

On this exercise, candidates heard a young man talking about his role as a voluntary fire fighter. This was generally approached quite well by candidates, but it was clear that many found the first three questions harder than the final three. Most candidates scored at least 3 of the 6 marks available and it proved an accessible opening exercise on this harder section of the paper.

Exercise 2 Questions 33-40

This final exercise was at an appropriate level of difficulty to test the more able candidates whilst still offering an occasional easier question to encourage all to finish! Most of the questions, however, did pose a challenge and led to a good spread of marks in this part of the test. On **Question 33**, some invalidated their answer by writing that Maud was going to cross the Atlantic. A short answer such as *pour traverser le Pacifique* was adequate to gain the mark. On **Question 34**, the two required elements were that Maud was ready both physically and mentally. Answers such as *sa volonté est là* were accepted for one of the marks and answers could be given in either order. On **Question 35**, very few were familiar with the correct spelling of *vagues*. *Vages* was accepted by Examiners as was *orages* or *tempêtes*. On **Question 36**, the required concept was to prove that she could do such a trip/be the first woman to achieve this. This was not beyond the reach of the better candidates. **Question 37** was the easiest question on this exercise and nearly all candidates who finished the paper scored the mark. On **Question 38**, some candidates invalidated their answers by including the incorrect age of 6, rather than 16, in their answers and some failed to score the mark as they incorrectly wrote that Maud had done *courses* rather than *cours par correspondance*. The last two questions proved to be a good test of the most able candidates. **Question 39** required a reference to the people she loved or her friends and on **Question 40** a reference needed to be made to the concept of giving the letters to Maud before the trip or of her reading the letters during the trip. Answers which stated that Maud's friends sent letters during the trip did not gain the mark.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/02
Reading and Directed Writing

General comments

Examiners judged that the demands of the November 2006 paper were in line with the demands of papers in previous years. As usual, although there was a full range of performance, a large majority demonstrated a good understanding of the texts and found the writing tasks accessible. Candidates had been well prepared in Centres and seemed familiar with the test-types – they had clearly been trained to read questions carefully and cover all tasks in their answers. Apart from a few exceptions, scripts were legible and the level of presentation good. All Candidates appear to have had enough time to complete the paper.

Comments on specific questions

Section 1

Exercise 1 Questions 1-5

Where candidates did not score full marks it was usually because they opted for C in **Question 3**.

Exercise 2 Questions 6-10

Candidates usually scored full marks for this exercise.

Exercise 3 Questions 11-15

This exercise caused some difficulties for weaker candidates who were confused by *histoire*.

Exercise 4 Question 16

Many candidates managed to communicate the required points sufficiently clearly to score the three marks available for communication. However, although in a minority, a surprising number were not confident about core vocabulary, eg

- *pâtisserie*: some candidates gave *pasteri*, *baguetterie* or *bucherie*
- *gâteau*: some wrote *gateu* or *cadeau*.

Section 2

Exercise 1 Questions 17-25

High scores were common on this exercise. **Question 17** was usually correctly answered, though a few candidates opted for C. However, the purpose of Hugo's letter was clearly to tell of a problem he had with his mother. For **Question 18**, candidates were able to state that Hugo was playing with his new game when his mother came into the room. In **Question 19**, *pour une heure* was the most frequent incorrect answer: the text makes it clear that Hugo had the game for one evening. **Question 20** caused few problems. In **Question 21**, candidates sometimes thought Hugo intended to play for an hour; the correct answer was 10 minutes. **Question 22** was well answered in general, but **Question 23** caused a lot of difficulties. Candidates were able to get a mark for stating that Hugo wasn't doing his homework, but many gave *elle se faisait confiance* as the other reason why his mother was upset. Examiners decided that this could not gain the mark as the use of *se* confused the message. In **Question 24**, *changer d'avis* caused some difficulties, but most candidates could say that computer games helped Hugo relax and scored the mark for **Question 25**.

Exercise 2 Questions 26

Most candidates found the topic of this writing task accessible and scores for communication were generally good. Popular choices were singers or film stars, closely followed by sportsmen and women. Very few candidates left out any of the required elements and most found far more things to say than the 10 points required for full marks.

Many candidates were also able to achieve the 20 ticks required to score full marks for accuracy.

Examiners noted that candidates often found it difficult to write *beaucoup* and *parce que* correctly. The word *cheveux* was often written as *chevaux*.

Section 3

Centres are reminded that in 2007 all candidates will be required to attempt this final section of the Reading and Directed Writing paper.

Exercise 1 Questions 27-32

Although this exercise proved quite challenging for some candidates, the majority understood the text and coped reasonably well with the questions. A few candidates appeared to disregard (or maybe did not understand) the rubric and provided a 'corrected' version of a statement, even when they had declared it to be *Vrai*. This did not affect their marks. Some candidates only attempted the *Vrai/Faux* element of the exercise and made no attempt to correct the *Faux* statements.

Questions 27, 28, 29 and 30 were usually correctly answered. Candidates often thought that **Question 31** was *Vrai*. The text clearly states that prison is not the answer and the mark was awarded for answers along the lines of *c'est la fierté et la joie d'avoir réussi qui change les jeunes/ils ont besoin d'un objectif/une longue marche peut aider ces jeunes*. Where candidates correctly identified the statement as *Faux* they were usually able to supply a correct justification. **Question 32** was often thought to be *Faux*, but according to the text if the youngster completes the journey, *il est libre*. Therefore the statement *Pour retrouver la liberté, le jeune prisonnier doit réussir à finir la marche* has to be *Vrai*.

Exercise 2 Questions 33-41

Many candidates understood the text and the questions sufficiently to do reasonably well on this exercise. **Question 33** asked candidates for how long *Paris Plage* is available and the mark was awarded for *un mois*. *Tous les étés/depuis quelques années* were often given by candidates, but were not accepted, as Examiners felt they were the answer to a different question. **Questions 34, 35 and 36** were mostly correctly answered. In **Question 37**, many candidates were able to provide something along the lines of *les routes le long de la Seine sont fermées à la circulation/en empêchant/fermant la circulation* and scored the mark. However many candidates did not understand the question and/or the text and gave *des plages de sable avec chaises longues et parasols*, which did not score. In **Question 38**, *Michel aime prendre son petit déjeuner* was a popular answer, but for the mark to be awarded it needed to be clear that he liked to eat his breakfast/croissant on one of the beaches. **Question 39** caused the most difficulties and many candidates simply copied out a large chunk of the text. Examiners were looking for some reference to the *ambiance* or music to award the mark. **Questions 40 and 41** were on the whole answered well.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/03
Speaking

General comments

This Speaking Test was common to all candidates, whether Core or Extended, and, as in 2005, a wide range of performance was heard by Moderators. Generally, the candidature displayed a very pleasing level of competence and their range of communication skills was good. The majority of candidates had been appropriately prepared for the test and were familiar with its requirements.

Administration

Regrettably, Moderators reported an increase in the number of clerical errors. The following administrative problems were encountered:

- Missing MS1 (computer-printed) Mark Sheets: the Moderator copy of the MS1 Mark Sheet must be included with the materials for moderation to allow Moderators to check that totals have been correctly transferred from the Oral Examination Summary Mark Sheet.
- Transcription errors: some Centres recorded different marks on the MS1 Mark Sheets from those recorded on the Working Mark Sheet (Oral Examination Summary Mark Sheet). It is **essential** that all clerical work is completed with care and Centres are reminded that it is their responsibility to check that Total Marks are correctly transferred to the MS1 Mark Sheet.
- Errors in addition of marks: Centres are reminded that they must ensure that the addition of each candidate's marks is checked before transfer to the MS1 Mark Sheet. The number of errors found and corrected by Moderators was unacceptably high.
- Centres are reminded of the need to include the name of the conducting Examiner in the space allowed for this purpose on the Working Mark Sheet (Oral Examination Summary Mark Sheet).
- Incorrect candidate numbers: it is crucial that names and numbers on all documentation are correct.
- Use of more than one teacher/Examiner per Centre: where large Centres wish to use more than one teacher/Examiner, permission to do so must be requested from CIE well before **each** Oral examination session. Where permission is granted, internal moderation procedures will need to be put in place in the Centre to ensure that candidates follow a single rank order. Such Centres will then submit a recorded sample of 6 candidates, across the range, in the usual way, but ensuring that the work of all teacher/Examiners is covered.

Quality of recording

Many Centres had taken great care to ensure the audibility of their samples, but all Moderators received work from at least one or two Centres which was inaudible in places. This was sometimes the result of poor positioning of the microphone/tape recorder. Centres are reminded of the need to check all equipment prior to the test in the room in which the examination will take place. Examiners should also remember to announce the name and number of each candidate on the recording – the candidate him/herself should not do this. Once started, the recording of each candidate should be continuous, e.g. the tape must not be paused/stopped during an individual candidate's test.

Timings/Missing elements

Timings were usually good (15 minutes per candidate), but some Centres persist in not examining candidates for the correct amount of time. Some tests were very short and did not comply with the requirements of the examination. Each candidate must attempt two Role plays (one Role play A and one Role play B), a Topic/Discussion and a General Conversation. Some Centres omitted the General Conversation section, but awarded their candidates marks as if it had been completed. Centres are reminded that they grossly disadvantage their candidates if they leave out a section of the test. In such cases Moderators have no other choice but to reduce the marks for a Centre: marks cannot be awarded for work which is not attempted! It also remains essential that Examiners in Centres prepare their own roles

carefully in the Role plays so that they are confident as to the format of the test and they can help candidates to achieve of their best. Please remember to ensure that all candidates receive similar treatment in terms of timing.

Preparation of candidates

Most Centres had prepared their candidates in an appropriate way and there was evidence of spontaneous, natural conversation in the two conversation sections. There was, however, a small number of Centres in which candidates were over prepared. Centres are reminded that under no circumstances must candidates know in advance the questions they are to be asked in the examination. It is also important that the Examiner varies questions between candidates. If candidates are over-prepared, it becomes difficult for Moderators to hear evidence of the ability to cope with unexpected questions in a variety of tenses and candidates are denied access to the top bands of the mark scheme. It was pleasing, however, to note that in the large majority of Centres, Examiners did manage to engage their candidates in a lively, spontaneous and engaging way, following up leads wherever possible. Such Examiners used a variety of questions with different candidates and pitched the level of questioning according to the ability of the candidate being tested.

Application of the mark scheme

The mark scheme was generally well applied in Centres and marking was often close to the agreed standard. Where marks did need adjusting it was usually for one of the following reasons:

- Failure to complete all the Role play tasks
- Short and/or missing Topic/Discussion and General Conversation sections
- Lack of questions to elicit a variety of tenses.

Comments on specific questions

Role Plays

Role Plays A

Centres are reminded to encourage candidates to attempt all parts of each task. Marks can only be awarded for completion of the tasks set by CIE, so Examiners must keep to the specified tasks. If only one part of a two-part task is completed, the maximum mark available for the task is 1.

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 vocabulary and topics from the Defined Content (Areas A, B and C). Generally, candidates found them to be accessible and even the weakest candidates were able to score at least one mark per task.

An invitation out

Candidates generally coped well with these tasks and were able to say what they wanted to buy and arrange a time to meet up. They were, however, less successful on the last task which required them to invite the friend out to eat at a restaurant.

Shopping at a market

Again, this was approached well by candidates. Most could give the names of fruits and were often well prompted by Examiners if they forgot to state the quantity. Weaker candidates found it more difficult to express the negative on Task 4. On the last task, most were able to ask the stall holder for bread (which was acceptable) or ask where the nearest *boulangerie* was.

In a café

This was generally well done, but some candidates did not know how to ask for different flavours of ice cream. Weaker candidates could not ask for the bill on Task 5.

Role Plays B

Phoning a language school

Candidates were able to explain why they were ringing, but found Task 2 more difficult. Only the more able were able to use *depuis* correctly. Other tasks were well done.

Asking permission to go out

Some candidates missed out part of the first task, but coped well with saying where and with whom they wanted to go and at what time. The explanation on Task 4 as to what had happened the last time was not well done, but most attempted the last task well saying that they would ring if there were a problem.

Phoning a hotel

Weaker candidates confused the tense on the first task saying that they wanted to make a reservation which resulted in a confusion of message. Tasks 2 and 3 were well done, but many found it difficult to ask how to get to the hotel from the airport. Pronunciation was often poor and some candidates asked how to get to the airport from the hotel. The last task was well done.

Topic/Discussion

As last year there was a wide variety of topics chosen by candidates. Pleasingly, cases of candidates choosing to talk on the topic of *Moi-même* were rare. Centres are reminded that Examiners should allow candidates to talk for a minute or two before interrupting them with questions. The discussion which followed the initial exposition was often well conducted in Centres and there were many fluent and engaging exchanges during which Examiners asked questions to stretch their candidates. The best examining gave lots of opportunities for use of a variety of tenses. (Centres are reminded that candidates have to show the ability to convey past and future meaning in order to score a mark of more than 7 for linguistic content.)

As last year, Life in another country, Holidays and School/Leisure were popular choices across the candidature. Most candidates chose topics which were at an appropriate level of difficulty in terms of linguistic requirements. It was a pleasure to listen to many of these topics which were often presented well and gave candidates the opportunity to express a variety of opinions. There were many fluent and engaging performances.

General Conversation

Again, there were some good performances heard from candidates of all abilities. This was often due to skilful and patient examining which encouraged candidates to expand on their answers across a range of topics. Good performances often resulted when candidates were at ease with the Examiner. It was clear from the performances heard that such exchanges were the norm in the foreign language classroom for the vast majority of this candidature. As such, they represented a fair way to test skills which are integral to good classroom practice. It remains a pleasure for Moderators to hear this international candidature talking about a huge variety of lifestyles and experiences.

FRENCH (Foreign Language)

Paper 0520/04
Continuous Writing

General comments

Candidates for this component usually bring enthusiasm to Continuous Writing in French and there was much to commend in the overall quality of work this year. Despite the increase in the number of scripts received, there were few inappropriate entries. The more able displayed linguistic flair blended with the necessary accuracy to achieve a high level of performance. Average candidates, while their use of language might vary in standard, usually understood what was required and were able to fulfil most of the tasks. That said, there are a number of aspects of exam technique which should be addressed to improve results.

The time allowed for this paper should be sufficient for candidates to write their answers slowly and deliberately, with due consideration to the construction of each sentence. There should be time available to revise work and to eliminate unnecessary errors. Disregard of the basics is costly in the matter of Language Marks. Faulty French is not rewarded by the Accuracy Mark Scheme. Higher scores would ensue if candidates took a careful look at what they have written to correct such errors as: the inconsistency of the gender of the writer, the mixing of *tu* and *vous* in the letter questions, the failure to make agreements on adjectives and past participles, verb forms and especially the misspelling of familiar words such as *beaucoup*, *déjeuner* and *(mal)heureusement*. The time allowance should also enable candidates to deliver a piece written in a clear, legible hand with normal spacing between words. This year many scripts were presented in very small writing, making them difficult to decipher, or in a hastily written hand where letters were ill formed or ambiguous. As has been stated in previous reports, Examiners cannot award marks to work they cannot read.

The length of answers is problematic. Examiners stress every year that overlong pieces run the risk of exceeding the word count specified in the rubric, yet every year many Communication Marks cannot be awarded as they are dealt with outside the first 140 words. Instead of offering lengthy pieces of work, candidates would be better advised to concentrate on the quality and accuracy of their French.

Examiners are always pleased to reward ambition and this was present in abundance on the best scripts. It was disappointing, however, to find so many over cautious answers. Common features were the use of excessively long lists of nouns such as food items or school subjects and the use of a clutter of unnecessary adjectives, e.g. *Notre grande école importante rouge et blanche*. No Language Marks are awarded for copying sections of the rubric. Candidates should have the confidence to rely on their own French and not cling to borrowed language.

It was pleasing to find very few irrelevant pieces. Most adhered closely to the rubric and attempted, although not always successfully, to fulfil each of the tasks as set. A minority did stray off the topic and tried to work in prepared material which was not germane to the question. Little credit is given to such practice when it occurs.

Question 1(a)

The question about one's own school was a predictably popular choice and no doubt candidates were glad to revisit a familiar topic area. As usual, the best answers were those which seemed to express authentic opinions based on personal experience. They gave a balance of generalities and specifics, made comments and substantiated them. Their schools were sometimes a window on the world, enjoying a multiracial intake of candidates, or they were small boarding schools offering security and companionship which were much appreciated. Others were large colleges offering a wide range of facilities and options, particularly in the fields of sport and recreational activities. In the vast majority of scripts, candidates described a happy and stimulating environment, and school life was an enjoyable experience with only minor drawbacks.

Regrettably, a number of answers concentrated on a very detailed mechanical account of the school day with only minimal comment or development. Examiners found little merit in responses which began irrelevantly by saying when the candidate awoke, what s/he had for breakfast etc. and said little about school life at all. Nor was there much reward for listing nearly every subject or sport the school offers. While such a conservative approach offers a prop to those with only a limited range of French, many answers were felt to waste the opportunity the question offered to display linguistic ability.

Most candidates were able to fulfil at least three of the five set tasks. The Communication Mark for the description of school life was usually accessible, but answers did tend to be prosaic, as mentioned earlier, and could be over long, leading to a shortage of space for the other required elements. Likes and dislikes included more originality. Candidates enjoyed the company of classmates most, then extracurricular activities such as sport and music. Lessons rarely topped the list. Dislikes included the usual distaste for the uniform, the canteen food and the strictness of the school regime. Some subjects were popular, others not, usually depending on whether the candidate liked the teacher. The positives normally outweighed the negatives and some actually claimed there was nothing to dislike at all about school. Most were able to give a *j'aime* and a *je n'aime pas*, but again the disappointing aspect of a number of scripts was the very basic and repetitive nature of the language used thereafter. Candidates should be reminded to adhere closely to the precise requirements of the rubric. They were asked what they liked/disliked about school and why? Marks were often lost for a failure to give reasons. Those who wrote that they liked school because the sport was good, but did not explain why, sacrificed a mark for Communication. The *programme de la visite* was a more challenging topic for weaker candidates, but was handled imaginatively by the better ones (*il y aura un concert, nous ferons du sport ensemble, on va faire le tour du collège*). The future tense did not present a serious barrier. Some were perhaps overambitious and foundered in their attempts to say 'we will show you round the college' or 'we hope you will enjoy the visit'. Sadly a number of candidates did not score Communication Marks for the fifth element as they had already used up the allowed number of words.

Although the language of school life was familiar to most, there were some surprising lapses, as when common words such as *cours* were rendered as *courses* or *métiers*, *professeur* was repeatedly misspelled and clock time was wrongly expressed.

Question 1(b)

The dangers of fast food seem to have been drilled into candidates throughout the world and the topic had no doubt featured in the preparation for this examination at many Centres. Candidates found plenty to say on the subject and many were able to express an interesting argument. Most came down emphatically against fast food. It contained all kinds of unhealthy products, excessive amounts of fat, salt and sugar. Overindulgence led to serious health risks and obesity. Education in healthy eating in schools was deemed a must. Our candidates themselves hardly ever ate fast food. Examiners were left wondering how MacDonald's *et al* survive at all!

The tasks were nearly always understood and attempts to fulfil them were appropriate. The description of the candidate's own diet was sometimes glossed over or omitted in the eagerness to denounce the bad eating habits of others. Mother's cooking was touchingly held up as a model for all. She offered a balanced diet of vegetables and fruit, fish and meat and insisted her child drank profuse quantities of water, all of which was apparently relished and applauded. Fast food was rarely consumed and then only in the company of peer groups. Some wisely commented that fast food was tempting or even delicious and very convenient, but should be taken sparingly and then only if one ate healthily most of the time and led an active life. Some interpreted the question as a critique of young people's life-style in general and chose to defend or criticise *les jeunes de nos jours* rather than give an account of their own eating habits. This was accepted as a legitimate response providing each task was addressed properly. The most commonly held view was that the article was unfair and that most young people were like the writer and had a very healthy life-style. Enthusiasm for sport and regular exercise was almost universal. Most claimed to enjoy competitive games, inside and outside school. Hardly any owned up to watching television much or other passive indulgences. The active life and keeping fit were for all, it seemed. Few were ever *paresseux*.

It was a pity so many chose to lift quite long sections verbatim from the rubric, especially when referring to the article. Candidates should be aware that no credit is given for such 'lifting' when no manipulation of language occurs. There were linguistic and lexical difficulties in such a discursive question. *Régime* and *alimentaire* were not always recognised. All seemed to understand *santé*, but many could not find the word *sain*. *Équilibré* was found commonly and used appropriately and expressions such as *être en forme* were well used. Against that, every day words such as *trop*, *plus* and *beaucoup* were confused and weaker candidates used them interchangeably. *Faire du sport* and *jouer au tennis* gave difficulty. The words for fat

in food were not generally known, but some wrote confidently about which foods were rich in necessary vitamins and proteins.

Notwithstanding the problems, the standard of answers to this question was quite high. Many Centres had clearly identified this topic as important and had prepared their candidates accordingly, enabling many of them to make a cogent response in appropriate language.

Question 2

Many candidates who had scored quite well for **Question 1** when present tenses were the norm, found marks much harder to come by in **Question 2** when past tenses were required. Also the more open ended nature of the task, which requires candidates to invent a series of events and reactions, presented difficulties which depressed the marks awarded.

The main task was usually understood correctly to be an attempt by the class to organise a day out for small children, usually without the participation of teachers. A minority did not understand *sortie* and wrote about a party for children or a class activity instead. Usually no more than one Communication Mark was lost in such cases as most of the tasks involved organising and entertaining children and therefore overlapped naturally. Preparation usually involved requesting parents' permission, booking a coach, buying tickets, cooking food or making sandwiches. Most dealt competently with this topic but in many scripts the preparation occupied a large block of the work and left little room to describe the events which took place on the day. It was a pity to find unnecessarily long lists of food and drink, which seemed to be employed simply to pad out the story and scored few Language Marks. The destinations chosen were nearly always plausible for an outing with small children. They included the seaside, the country, zoos, local parks, museums and theme parks. Some chose to write about a meal out at a restaurant or a visit to a cinema which were also deemed to be acceptable although perhaps less suitable for little children. What happened was sometimes that the children simply played together or went swimming, ate their picnic or enjoyed some other recreational activity. The more interesting accounts told of the loss of a child, an accident or a sudden illness and the resulting distress or embarrassment for the narrator who usually rose to the occasion and resolved the situation, displaying maturity beyond his/her years. The narrator's reactions to the day's events were usually of satisfaction for a job well done, resulting in a great day out for all concerned. Occasionally, the day turned sour and the narrator reflected on sad events, vowing never to try to organise such an outing ever again. Many admitted to sheer exhaustion after a day spent coping with unruly infants, though others decided that it had been a delight to share a day with such little treasures.

In a fairly free composition such as this, Examiners do allow plenty of leeway in the interpretation of the rubric and almost any sequence of events was allowable within reason. However, candidates must be aware that the stimulus is expressed in past tenses and that in order to score marks for Communication they must use suitable past tenses in their response. This year, many scripts scored low marks due to the inappropriate use of the present and other tenses in this question.

Some lively and imaginative accounts were presented by the stronger candidates who displayed a wide range of structures and idiom and a rich variety of suitable vocabulary, delivered with a minimal incidence of error. Examiners commend such candidates for their diligent preparation for this paper and for their ability to compose original and accurate French under exam conditions. However, a disappointingly high proportion of candidates presented work containing elementary errors in response to this question. These regularly included faulty verb forms, the misuse of the perfect tense of *être* verbs such as *aller*, *rentrer* and *arriver*, and reflexives such as *s'amuser* and *se reposer*. Common among lexical errors were the confusion of *pleurer* and *pleuvoir*, *prendre* and *emmener*, *fatigué* and *fatigant*, *joli* and *heureux*. Routine mechanical errors with every day words were commonplace, especially the imperfect of *être* when *étais*, *était* and *étaient* were confused. The word *journée* (day) was frequently used for *voyage* or *trajet* and preparations were rendered as *préparations* when *préparatifs* was given in the rubric. As mentioned above, the time allowed for this paper should allow for a deliberate and painstaking approach to writing answers and, when the answer is complete, a careful revision of what has been written. Many would seem to have rushed their work, thereby making careless errors, and to have failed to read it through afterwards in an attempt to correct mistakes.