

GCSE

French

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J730**

General Certificate of Secondary Education (Short Course) **J030 J130**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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A701 Listening

General Comments:

The general standards displayed in this year's French listening comprehension test were pleasing. Examiners reported a good level of understanding at both tiers. Candidates did however find the final two exercises at Higher Tier demanding, particularly the final exercise which targets Grade A* and in which questions had to be answered in English. In many cases answers given lacked precision or sometimes suggested guesses rather than clear understanding of the French.

As last year, examiners commented on poor hand-writing in a number of cases. Candidates are reminded that, if they change their answer to any question, such changes must be made clear so that the examiner can be certain which answer the candidate wishes to have marked. Efforts are always made by markers to decipher poor hand-writing but it sometimes proves very difficult to do so if the standard of presentation is poor.

Candidates generally answered all questions and respected rubrics. It is clear that they had been very well prepared for the examination and teachers are to be commended on their efforts, as always, to ensure that their candidates were able to perform to the best of their abilities.

It is pleasing to see how candidates make appropriate use of their reading time before the recording is started. The habit of underlining or highlighting subject headings, salient words and instructions represents very good practice and should be passed on to any candidates attempting this examination.

It is also good practice to make full use of both playings of the text for each exercise. Some candidates make provisional answers during the first playing and check these answers during the second playing. It is important however, as mentioned above, that they make it clear which answer they wish to have marked by deleting clearly any provisional attempts so as to ensure that the examiner knows which answer to mark.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Foundation Tier

Exercise 1 Questions 1-8: Candidates scored well on this opening exercise although a fair number of errors occurred on the opening question in which the word *église* was not understood as well as might have been expected. Q.2, which tested the number *trente*, was not always correctly identified, 20 being a commonly preferred answer. One might expect the vast majority to be successful in identifying basic numbers of this type, although the addition of the word *environ* in the stimulus might have caused confusion for some. Questions 3 and 4 were well answered. On Q.5, grapes and strawberries were sometimes confused. Some candidates failed to recognise *stade* on Q.6. *Sandwich au fromage* (Q.7) and *jouer aux boules* (Q.8) were both well understood.

Exercise 2 Questions 9-16: The topic area of hobbies is clearly familiar territory to candidates who generally scored well on this exercise. On Q.9 some candidates had problems in identifying *dessiner / je dessine* although the addition of *les voitures de course* may have confused some. Q.10 (*faire du ski*) was well answered. Q.11 was potentially a little more difficult, but candidates listened well and picked out the clues provided in *lecture, lire* and *bibliothèque*. On Q.12 candidates were able to select the correct answer by readily understanding the words *animaux* and *chats*. Q.13 proved a little more demanding, not all candidates showing comprehension of

faire la cuisine and *préparer des repas*. Q.14 was easy given the readily identifiable *musique* and *jouer du piano*. Most candidates showed good understanding of *aller à la pêche* on Q.15, no doubt aided by the inclusion of *poissons* in the following sentence. The final question proved a little more difficult as the phrase *à la campagne* was not readily understood and the opening phrase *j'aime être en plein air* did not easily aid comprehension. It should be noted that a few offered “swimming” as an answer for Q.15 or Q.16. This is of course the answer for the example, crossed out on the question paper. Candidates should be reminded that the example is never used again in the body of the exercise.

Exercise 3 Questions 17-24: This was a potentially more difficult exercise in that answers had to be given in English to open ended questions rather than the objective type of test used for the other exercises. The subject matter of school was of course familiar to candidates. Most managed to answer quite well but only the best candidates scored high marks. Q.17 tested comprehension of the number *neuf cents*. Quite a lot of errors were evident here, with flawed accuracy in answers such as 9000, 97, 915 and even 9. Clearly *cent* was not readily picked out by all candidates. Similarly on Q.18, there was generally insufficient accuracy in rendering the time *huit heures et quart*. “8 o'clock” was a common incorrect answer here, perhaps due in some cases to some candidates' assumption that this is the time at which the majority of schools in France start. They should be advised to listen carefully to both playings of the extract so that they can give a full rendering of the relevant time. The word *bicyclette* was well rendered on Q.19. It should be noted here that misspellings in English (and this was a common case) are not penalised provided the correct understanding is clearly given. The school subjects on Q.20 and 21 were nearly always correctly identified and most correctly rendered *de l'eau* on Q.22 although there was some evidence of guesswork with answers such as “milk” and “fruit juice”. On Q.23 candidates had to supply the word “homework” (which was generally known) rather than the more general “work”. Most understood *amusants* on Q.24 though again there was some guessing with answers such as “boring”, “lovely” and so on.

Foundation and Higher Tiers

Exercise 4 FT Questions 25-32 and HT Exercise 1 Questions 1-8: Many candidates at both tiers scored full marks on this exercise. It was pleasing to see how many candidates understood the basic information in *amis* (Q.25/1) without being misled by the distractor *Tu y es allé avec ta famille?*, and in *appartement* (Q.27/3) not being misled by *Vous avez logé dans un hôtel?* Examiners were impressed by the proportion of candidates who understood *la plongée sous-marine* in Q.29/5. The last three questions were more often incorrectly answered with “windy” being selected at Q.30/6, through lack of familiarity with the past tense *il a plu*, “people” for Q.31/7 (probably a guess) and problems in understanding the phrase *tout était très cher... j'ai dépensé beaucoup d'argent* on Q.32/8. Generally, however, this exercise was answered well, showing how candidates listened carefully for the required information.

Exercise 5 FT Questions 33-36 and HT Exercise 2 Questions 9-12: Here again candidates scored well at both tiers. It was pleasing to see how all candidates clearly understood what was required in the exercise and placed answers in the appropriate columns. They occasionally gave the wrong answer for one of the two parts of each question and there was evidence of some guesswork such as the assumption by some that working in a bank would provide better pay. However, the vast majority selected the correct answers for the final, potentially most difficult question Q.36/12 and seemed to find little difficulty in selecting the correct answers for the earlier questions. For the most part, at both tiers, low marks were rare on this exercise and suggested good knowledge of work-related vocabulary.

Higher Tier

Exercise 3 Questions 13-20: This gist-comprehension exercise represented an increase in difficulty and supplied a good range of scores. There were, nevertheless, pleasing numbers of candidates scoring high or full marks on the exercise. A good start was made on Q.13 which

virtually all candidates identified as “sports”. Questions 14 and 15 were sometimes reversed but most were successful in picking out “illness” on Q.16. Better listeners managed to pick out *neiger* and *beau temps* on Q.15. The clues on Q.17 of *séries* and *informations* were not so easily distinguished and on Q.18 the answer was only easy if candidates readily understood *j’ai lu* and *roman*. Most successfully picked out restaurants on Q.19 and reasonable numbers selected “neighbours” for the final question. This exercise certainly discriminated well, with very good marks for the best listeners and with average success for the majority, who scored around 4 or 5 marks.

Exercise 4 Questions 21-28: This multiple-choice exercise required careful listening in order to select the correct answers. The text contained some fairly difficult expressions and vocabulary but they were normally backed up by synonyms or supporting expressions. Candidates should be advised to listen carefully to both playing of the material and to look at the alternatives carefully before making their choices. On Q.21 it was easy to pick out *divorcé*. The word *compatissante* on Q.22 was more difficult but the supporting phrases *elle pense aux autres* and *cherche toujours à les aider* helped lead to the correct answer of “kind-hearted”. On Q.23 it was necessary to understand the word *jumeau* in order to select the correct answer (there was no supporting synonym given here, although the best listeners may have picked out **notre anniversaire est le 12 juin**). Q.24 required careful listening to establish that Raoul and André liked doing the same things. The skill required was to select the correct answer from other material which was not required in order to answer the question. On Q.25 option C rather than B was quite often chosen. The final two questions proved fairly difficult, as there was some more complex vocabulary such as *spirituel* and *blagues* (though both were supported by the phrase *raconter des histoires drôles*). The key word for Q.28 (*détendu*) was not generally very well known and “inspired” was often guessed.

Exercise 5 Questions 29-36: The final exercise, targeting grade A*, was difficult and candidates did not generally score good marks here. Again the skill involved listening closely to both playings of the material having read the questions carefully. As expected, a number of candidates guessed certain answers but there were also fairly high numbers of blank answer spaces. Maximum marks on the exercise were very rare. Q.29 was commonly answered by reference to Marie-Claude’s personality and though fair numbers clearly understood *cheveux*, the adjective *roux* was not well known and guesses such as “long” or “pretty” were common. Fair numbers were successful on Q.30 for which either of two answers was acceptable – the concepts of taking risks or of being criticised. Although misspelling of the latter was obviously not penalised, a number misheard the verb and rendered an answer based on “cricket”. There were frequent guesses for Q.31. The scheme was lenient in tolerating the verbs “appreciate”, “like”, “love” or “enjoy”, but in order to gain the mark candidates had to include the second concept of “what she does”, “her presenting” etc. It was fairly easy to pick out *habitude* for Q.32 and the scheme allowed a number of renderings including “normal”, “her life”, “routine” etc. On Q.33 the vast majority heard *intention* as *attention* thereby giving an incorrect concept and on Q.34 very few candidates grasped the concept that being accepted as a sports presenter is the same for men as for women. Fair numbers understood *les patins à roulette* on Q.35 though some offered “ice-skating” or “skateboarding” and there was some inevitable confusion with “roulette”. The concept that she was not very good at sport on Q.36 was not often understood and the inclusion of the word *enthousiasme* led some to believe that Marie-Claude suffered from asthma.

A702 Speaking

General Comments:

Centres are conducting the Controlled Assessment well and candidates are better prepared for the tasks. Overall the marking criteria were adequately applied this year and some centres were more accurate in the marks they awarded. In most cases there was some evidence that internal moderation had taken place within the centre.

In order for external moderation to run smoothly, it is advisable that centres continue to follow the guidelines regarding the conduct of the tests, the appropriateness of the tasks and the consistent and accurate application of the assessment criteria.

Centres are reminded that the necessary paper work and the recordings should be despatched or uploaded promptly to avoid any delays.

Administration

Most centres submitted their marks within the deadline and many made use of the Repository to forward the recordings and the required paper work. A good proportion of centres sent all the required documentation- Centre Authentication form, MS1, candidates Working Mark Sheets and Candidates Note forms.

It is however a feature of this year's exam that an increased number of arithmetic errors were noticed; centres are encouraged to use the electronic Working Mark Sheets (WMS) available on the OCR website. Most centres were quick to rectify errors, but this delays the moderation process significantly. Incomplete or erroneous information on WMS also seemed to be on the increase.

Centres are encouraged to submit their highest mark for Task 1 for moderation. It appears that in a number of cases Task 2 attracted a higher mark than Task 1 and it is in the spirit of the exam that moderation should take place for the highest mark.

Recordings

On the whole, recordings were very clear, both on CDs and on the Repository. When CDs were used it was very helpful when the external sleeve was clearly labelled as well as the electronic sound files. It is helpful when centres use the same recording software for all files submitted; this avoids any technical difficulties for the moderation teams.

It is recommended that centres dedicate a special area of the building for the speaking exams; a number of candidates were distracted by background noises, people entering the room and noisy corridors for example. When an external microphone is used the centre should insure that it is positioned to favour the candidate and when reading from notes examiners should keep exam paper rustling to a minimum.

The recommended duration of the exam is between 4 and 6 minutes. There was a high incidence of recordings exceeding 6 minutes – this is unnecessary, as work is not credited after 6 minutes. Some centres examined for less than 4 minutes, which put the candidates at a disadvantage as they had little time to answer open ended questions and fully answer unexpected questions.

Tasks

Candidates seemed extremely well prepared, sometimes at the expense of the more natural conversation elements required to access the highest marking bands in Communication.

Some candidates presented highly competent tests, showing accurate and purposeful use of idioms and tenses; these candidates usually addressed more individual topics and seemed to have done a considerable amount of research to be able to field more probing questions. In the case of fluent candidates, examiners should adapt the questioning to allow the candidates to enter natural interaction rather than ask pre written questions which sometimes do not make much sense to such a candidate. Examiners should also ensure that in this case they ask relevant questions in all time frames.

Other candidates appeared to be repeating what they had learnt by heart from a well-practiced script allowing little in the way of ‘unpredictable elements’. Unpredictable elements are included in the ‘4–5’ band and examiners should take heed of the necessity for such interaction to access higher bands. In a number of centres, and particularly after overlong presentations, moderators heard the examiners referring to “et maintenant la question surprise” or “finalement la question inattendue”, leaving candidates with very little opportunity to express themselves in a less prescribed manner.

Candidates are well drilled in giving opinions and justifications – this was a great help for weaker candidates as it enabled them to produce complex sentences despite the repetitive vocabulary. For more able, more fluent candidates, there was a lack of ambition in the qualifying vocabulary. For example: “Ce week end nous irons au parc avec mes copains, ce sera incroyable !” is not used in French as an opinion and turns a good sentence a rather ordinary one.

There was little variety in the tasks submitted and most centres chose to address the same topic in the same format for all candidates. Whilst this makes sense from an organisational point of view it generates the same answers and it is then difficult for examiners to differentiate the level of questioning between candidates. Favourite topics were Holidays, School and Healthy living. Other topics such as “at the tourist office” or “mon petit job” allowed examiners to seamlessly probe different tenses and the candidates to use complex structures and relevant information and vocabulary.

Teachers and examiners had worked very hard to prepare their candidates and most presented good examinations within the parameter of the exams.

Assessment

It is difficult to give a general statement regarding the application of the assessment criteria for summer 2016. Whilst a good number of centres applied the criteria well, marking tended to be lenient overall in the three assessment criteria.

In order to access the top bands for Communication (12–13 and 14–15 marks), candidates need to offer extra information in response to tasks/questions, including open-ended ones, relevance of vocabulary to the chosen topic, to be able to produce information spontaneously without being cued and develop and justify individual ideas and points of view.

Some centres were generous in assessing Quality of Language. In the ‘9–10’ band, candidates must show a confident and accurate use of a wide variety of complex structures (e.g. “avant de”, “après avoir/être”, “puisque”, “quant à”, “bien que”, adverbs, strong negatives) and include verbs and tenses. Minor errors are tolerated but they must be minor – for example the odd missing past participle, incorrect word order which does not compromise the meaning, and occasional incorrect possessive pronouns.

The '5–6' band addresses the “can connect verbs” criteria. This is important – it shows that candidates are aware of the necessary subject verb agreement.

The '3–4' band relates to “inconsistent overall” addressing at the same time the vocabulary and the time frames.

Regarding the Pronunciation and Intonation awards, over preparation led to difficulties in appraising the examinations. Many candidates had over rehearsed their test and therefore either spoke too fast, splitting sentences in the wrong place, or allowed end consonants to get in the way of their delivery. It was clear in some tests that the candidates had little understanding of what they were saying, having spent so much time producing the test orally rather than focusing on the meaning. Over emphasised intonation was also sometimes difficult to assess as it seemed to be in lieu of relevant vocabulary. Moderators noted this point a number of times.

Conclusion

The teachers and examiners made considerable efforts to administer the tests and prepare their candidates; this is evident by the overall good presentation of the work of the candidates and the standard of performance in the tests as well as the quick response to queries

For next year the moderators would like to encourage centres to read this report thoroughly and to consult the Guide to controlled assessment – Speaking, available on the OCR website.

A703 Reading

General Comments:

A wide range of marks was seen at both Tiers of this examination, suggesting that candidates had, for the most part, been entered for the appropriate Tier. There was, however, a small number, who struggled at Higher Tier, and may have seen greater success had they been entered for the Foundation Tier.

Examiners reported very few instances of blank responses on multiple choice sections, although some candidates failed to check that they had completed all questions. The major issue to emerge this year was a lack of precision in answers by some candidates, which led to some loss of marks.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Foundation Tier

Exercise 1: Questions 1 – 8

This proved to be quite a challenging start for a number of candidates. Examiners were disappointed by the responses to some of the items in this section. Knowledge of items of fruit, days and meals was often not secure. Most recognised *pommes* as a food item, but “pears” and “potatoes” were frequently seen answers, while *vendredi* and *petit déjeuner* were rendered incorrectly by a significant proportion. Additionally, *interdit*, *à vendre* and *ascenseur* were generally not well known.

Exercise 2: Questions 9 – 16

The majority of candidates scored very highly on this section. The most difficult proved to be Q.13, perhaps due to the vocabulary item *cadeaux*, and Q.15, where confusion appeared to be between “car” and “boat”.

Exercise 3: Questions 17 – 23

This exercise proved to be a good differentiator at this level. Where marks were lost here, it tended to be because of lack of knowledge of the topic as a whole. The more general vocabulary, such as *ennuyeux* and *tous les jours* caused few problems, as did the near cognates, *horreur* and *documentaires*. The more specialised terms, such as *jeux télévisés*, *les mêmes émissions* (often thought to refer to pollution) and *feuilleton* were more of a stumbling block.

Foundation and Higher Tiers

Exercise 4: Questions 24 – 31 / Exercise 1: Questions 1 – 8

Candidates at both Tiers were able to achieve a reasonable level of success in this section. Q.27/4, Q.28/5, and Q.29/6 were particularly well answered. On Q.24/1 there was evidence that candidates did not recognise *vêtements d'occasion*, while on Q.30/7 *gaspillage* was often not understood.

Exercise 5: Questions 32 – 39 / Exercise 2: Questions 9 – 16

A wide range of marks was seen on this exercise, which discriminated well. Candidates at both Tiers were able to access the task, and, even where answers were incorrect, a level of gist understanding of the text could often be discerned. Where marks were lost, it was most often due to incomplete or vague answers. On Q.32/9, it was the “south east” which was missed, or

rendered incorrectly, while on Q.34/11 candidates did not always make it clear that the person had been hit by a car. There was also a range of parts of the body mentioned. Q.35/12 gave rise to a number of “reducing” sporting activity rather than giving it up, and in Q.37/14, *lui* was sometimes thought to be a place. The best answered questions were Q.33/10 and Q.36/13. The most surprising was the number of candidates who thought that *mille* was “million”, or who did not recognise *vingt-cinq* on Q.39/16

Higher Tier

Exercise 3: Questions 17 – 23

Examiners reported a reasonable level of success on this task, which appears to have differentiated well. The most successful tasks were Q.20, Q.23 and Q.24. The remainder all caused difficulties in fairly equal measure with *spectacle*, and *coin* apparently being treated as cognates.

Exercise 4: Questions 24 – 31

This section led to much guesswork around the general theme of the task, relying on varying degrees of knowledge of IT issues, rather than concentrating on the detail within the text. Often the only correct answers seen were to Q.25, where around was not a requirement for the mark, and Q.31a, which allowed communication of any sort to score.

On Q.26, *sous* was usually not rendered, as candidates saw *oreiller* and thought of “ear”. “Library passes” and other vague methods of reducing computer access were usually seen for Q.27 and the majority stopped reading after seeing the brother’s activity for Q.28. Those who did read on were usually defeated by *dehors*. Q.29 led to many suggestions around the ideas of lack of sociability, concentration, body clocks and using phones in restaurants.

Exercise 5: Questions 32 – 39

The final exercise turned out to be suitably demanding, Q.35 and Q.39 being the least well answered, where *coup de main* and *attentes* presumably were not well known. Other items which caused issues were *banlieue* and *car*, which again was often seen as a cognate. Q.32, Q.34 and Q.38 were the most accessible answers.

Centres are to be congratulated on improvements this year, as fewer comments about handwriting were received. However, there is still a number of candidates, who do not answer all multiple choice questions, and too many who write over an answer instead of crossing out an incorrect one, which makes it difficult for an Examiner to know which is the intended response.

A704 Writing

General Comments:

Examiners reported that, in the majority of cases, all administration had been completed accurately and that most work from Centres was received reasonably close to the published date. However, Centres are reminded that work should be collated using a treasury tag, and not submitted in plastic wallets.

The best performance was seen where candidates were not constrained by a prescriptive outline task. They tended to write at a reasonable length, the most successful tending to be around 300–400 words. Below this word count there is insufficient opportunity to develop ideas, while, above this level, items tend to become repetitive and increasingly inaccurate. Few scripts were noted at the lower end of the mark range. At this level though, the use of dictionaries continues to cause problems.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Examiners felt that titles were often uninspiring and rarely differentiated. This led to similar responses being seen within and across Centres, which meant that it was difficult to see the work as providing individual responses. There was a clear tendency towards the overuse of pre-learnt phrases, in several cases all candidates starting each paragraph with the same phrase.

Many of the tasks selected led to the use of lists of nouns or infinitives of verbs, and other repetitive structures, the major culprits here being the topics of town, school, home and family. Even where more interesting topics appeared to be offered, candidates often resorted to information about what they ate or drank, rather than taking the opportunity to provide more culturally based information. Indeed, lack of depth has been a common criticism of the items seen: items on work containing extended descriptions of colleagues or extended lists of tasks; holiday topics concentrating on journeys or descriptions of hotels; and healthy eating items, which repetitively centred around '*manger*' and '*boire*', followed by a comment about a family member, who had died of cancer due to smoking and drinking.

Centres would be well advised to use topics, such as 'a disastrous holiday' and 'a film review', judiciously. Far too often these are being given to candidates, who do not have the ability to express themselves adequately. This frequently leads to clumsy and muddled accounts, with inconsistencies in the use of tense and little worthwhile opinion or justification. Where more able candidates work with these topics, however, Examiners reported reading some very interesting accounts, which allowed the candidate freedom to show what they are capable of, and the freedom to express themselves in the spirit of the examination.

The use of comparison carries similar issues. Weaker candidates being asked to provide a comparison between French and English schools, for example, tends to produce rather banal and uninformed pieces. These often lack clarity as candidates frequently mix up '*France/français*' and '*Angleterre/anglais*', and are unable to render the ideas of length of day or holidays with any degree of accuracy. However, more able candidates, especially those who clearly have experience of visits to a French speaking school, are able to produce some pertinent and worthy responses.

It is evident that candidates are, rightly, being advised to ensure that their writing includes opinions and justifications. More work needs to be done, however, on what constitutes a relevant opinion. There is an over-reliance on the use of such adjectives as '*ennuyeux/intéressant*' (which are also frequently misspelt) which shows a lack of imagination, and will not attract high marks.

Examiners are looking for more extended opinions and justifications, which are individual to the candidate rather than those taken from text books. This is especially the case in topics such as school, where opinions on school uniform (also often misspelt) tend to follow a well-trodden formula.

It has been pleasing to see some more adventurous attempts at justification, which use negatives or comparatives. These add variety and interest. However, Centres should be careful, when recommending these, that they, too, are not overused by candidates. They need to be used as one of an array of types of justification, which allow the candidate to show the extent of their linguistic capabilities. Again, where more able candidates are given the latitude to provide an individual, unconstrained response, Examiners noted having read some entertaining and impressive pieces of work.

This report in the past has repeatedly mentioned the misuse of idioms and the subjunctive. Unfortunately, this continues to be an issue. The use of idioms such as '*ça coûte les yeux de la tête*', while not being incorrect, is not what Examiners are looking for. They will receive scant reward where they are included as set phrases, while idiomatic phrases like '*il fait beau*' are not correctly produced. The use of the subjunctive in set phrases will also not impress unduly, especially when indicative verbs are routinely incorrectly formed. It should be recognised that '*je vais au bord de la mer pour que je puisse nager*' is not good usage.

In terms of correct verb usage, there appears to be an increasing tendency for candidates to confuse the use of tenses, especially the perfect and imperfect, the future and the conditional, and even the past and the future. This confusion is often linked to the misuse of '*dernier/prochain*'. It is not unusual to see phrases such as '*l'année prochaine j'ai visité Paris*'. This is a feature of work deemed to be in the '6–7' mark band of Quality of Language. Candidates would also benefit from ensuring that the acute accent is used on past participles, and that the linkage of *si* + imperfect + conditional is well established.

Aside from verbs, Centres would be advised to concentrate on adjectival and verbal agreements. These are taken into account during assessment of a piece of writing, and can suggest a lack of accurate usage. This, combined with lack of secure knowledge of gender, will inevitably detract from the overall impression of writing, even where verb forms are generally correct. The use of incorrect prepositions also has an effect on both the Communication and Quality of Language mark.

The use of notes sheets has been raised as an increasing issue. Often these are not completed, raising questions about how candidates manage sometimes to include extended and complex phrases in items where, elsewhere, the basics are incorrect. Sometimes notes are incorrect on the notes sheet, when the language is correct in the main item, which raises even more serious questions.

Linked to this is the question of candidates appearing to show a lack of understanding of what they are writing. Evidence of this includes essential words missing from the middle of sentences; phrases and words being repeated in a sentence; extracts being crossed out where they obviously do not fit and being rewritten later; and punctuation, especially full stops in the middle of sentences and nonsense sentences where it appears the final word of a sentence and its full stop have been omitted meaning that the next sentence morphs into it.

A further example of this is the issue of contradiction. This manifests itself in two main areas. Firstly, where candidates write as their opinion: '*Je n'aime pas les maths parce que je suis fort en maths*' and secondly, where the candidate informs us at the beginning of the item that they don't like their town because '*il n'y a rien à faire*', only to be told later that their town is good because '*il y a beaucoup à faire*'. Internal contradictions like these will inevitably lead to lower communication marks than might otherwise be the case.

Examiners were pleased to note that handwriting was generally not a great issue this year. Centres are reminded that it is acceptable for candidates with poor handwriting skills to produce word-processed items, as long as internet and spelling and grammar checkers are disabled. Examiners do check such items to ensure that the rules have been adhered to. Examiners were also pleased to find that a number of Centres are ensuring that right and left hand margins are being kept clear, so that annotations do not obscure the work.

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