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GCSE

**FRENCH**

8658/WF Paper 4 Writing Foundation Tier  
Report on the Examination

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## General Points

Changes were made to the 2023 papers to reflect the removal of the regulatory requirement to test vocabulary outside of the published vocabulary list.

The overall performance of students this year was encouraging. The variety of questions in the paper provided an opportunity for all students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge. As in previous series, the vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier. They were able to attempt all the questions and it was extremely rare to see blank responses. This year it was particularly encouraging to see an improvement in the quality of responses for questions 1 and 2. Students were able to refer to different time frames, use a variety of language, and express opinions, which enabled them to meet the demands of the assessment criteria for questions 2 and 4. As in previous series, where students failed to score marks was where inaccuracy caused a delay in communicating messages. The main reasons for this continue to be inaccurate verb formations and omissions. Another barrier to achievement was when students wrote much longer responses than the suggested word count and/or attempted a level of complexity of language not commensurate with their ability, thereby creating more scope for error. In addition, a lack of knowledge of key vocabulary and the inability to respond to the targeted rubrics and bullet points also impacted negatively on marks awarded.

## Question 1

Teachers are reminded that students are required to write four sentences about what is in the photo, i.e. a phrase that contains a verb or a construction using '*voici*' or '*voilà*'. Each sentence is marked separately and is worth a maximum of two marks. Teachers are reminded that this question is not marked for quality of language. For this reason, there is no need to provide any complex or variety of language. As in previous series, the best responses included successful use of simple phrases such as '*il y a*' or '*voici/voilà*' followed by a noun. Where students failed to score marks, it was mainly for the following reasons:

- Ambiguous use of numbers eg '*il y a un quatre personnes*'.
- When students attempted longer, more complex responses eg '*Il y a un homme que est mange une pomme, Il y a six pommes, il est mange une*'.
- Not including a verb or issues with verb formation which caused delay in communication eg use of the infinitive form of a verb or use of an auxiliary verb with an infinitive eg '*ils manger, ils sont boire*'.
- Incomprehensible spelling of key vocabulary and English words that do not exist in French.
- When students wrote one word only.
- When students commented about things not in the photo.
- When students wrote that the picture is in black and white which, of course, did not answer the question in the rubric '*qu'est-ce qu'il y a sur la photo?*'
- Unsuccessful attempts at describing the weather conditions.
- '*a*' '*est*' confusion eg '*ils ont heureux*'.

## Advice to students

- Keep the sentences simple to ensure that a clear message is being communicated.
- Avoid adding a variety of details to individual sentences.

- Use '*il y a*' or '*voici/voilà*' with a noun.
- Avoid using infinitives.

## Question 2

Teachers are reminded that there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 40 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets.

### Content

The criteria for assessment refers to both the coverage of the bullet points and clarity of communication. The vast majority of students successfully addressed all bullet points with some development. The first and last bullet points '*l'uniforme*' and '*les devoirs*' were widely known and successfully addressed. The second bullet point '*votre professeur préféré*' was also widely recognised, and although it was on the whole addressed successfully, as in previous series, some students wrote sentences using '*votre*' for this bullet point which meant their response could not be credited. The third bullet point was less widely known. However, many students were able to respond successfully either because they knew what '*la pause-déjeuner*' was, or they had been trained effectively to provide an opinion, for example '*J'aime la pause-déjeuner car c'est bon*'.

### Quality of language

The vast majority of students were able to include a good variety of appropriate vocabulary and grammatical structures. As in previous series, students demonstrated the ability to express opinions in a variety of ways, to use different persons of the verb together with intensifiers and connectives. In addition, the majority of students were also able to produce responses that were generally accurate and were able to access the top band of marks. Where students failed to score highly was because they had attempted complexity beyond their level of language or verbs were either omitted, in the infinitive or written as past participles instead of in the present tense. However, the majority of errors seen were minor.

### Advice to students

- Mention all the of the bullet points. Attempt to write something about them rather than omitting them. Tick off the bullet points in the rubric once they have been addressed.
- Try to include the words in the bullet point but change '*votre*' to '*mon/ ma*' (eg *mon professeur préféré*) in order to ensure that the bullet point is addressed effectively.
- Learn a variety of opinion phrases to express your likes/dislikes and include a different one for each bullet point. For example, short, simple sentences using '*j'adore, j'aime, je n'aime pas, je déteste*' and '*c'est super/genial/fantastique*' are the most successful.
- Learn to spell commonly used words such as '*ennuyeux, intéressant, professeur, collègue, je n'aime pas/j'aime ça, parce que*'.
- Use French words you know in order to avoid using English words such as 'canteen, uncomfortable'.

### Question 3

For this question, there are 5 marks for Conveying key messages and 5 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Teachers are reminded that the key messages are designed to include a level of demand aimed at covering Grades 1 to 5 and that all students should be able to communicate some messages despite minor errors. The question differentiated well with all students being able to score some marks.

#### Conveying key messages

My sister plays football.	The vocabulary here is widely known and on the whole, the messages were successfully conveyed. There were occasional incorrect spellings of 'soeur' and the use of the infinitive 'jouer'.
I like geography because it is interesting.	Again, the vocabulary was familiar to the vast majority of students. Some students provided the English spelling of 'geography' and there were misspellings of 'intéressant'. However, the vast majority of students were able to convey the messages and score marks here.
There is a small table in the bedroom.	'Il y a une petite table' was generally conveyed effectively although some students incorrectly translated 'table' as 'tableau'. Other issues were when the preposition 'dans' and the definite article 'la' were unknown.
Every day I go to the park by bus.	Despite containing widely-known vocabulary, the main issues here were the use of 'toujours', rather than 'tous les jours', students unable to produce 'je vais' correctly and the preposition 'by' either unknown or omitted.
Last week I lost my mobile phone at the market.	This sentence contained high demand elements, targeted at the most able students. Where students were unsuccessful, it was because of the following issues: Some confusion between 'last' and 'next', and 'week, weekend' and 'month', the verb 'perdre' was not widely known and the vocabulary for 'mobile phone' and 'market' were also either unknown or incorrectly translated.

#### Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

Minor errors did not prevent the award of marks for conveying key messages provided they were communicated. However, when awarding marks for application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures, the element of accuracy had to be considered. For example, inaccurate spellings of 'intéressant, chambre' and 'marché' and wrongly spelled versions of or elements omitted from the translations of 'joue, dans la chambre, vais, au parc, en bus' and 'au marché' had to be taken into account when marks were awarded for application of grammatical knowledge and structures.

## Advice to students

- Practise/revisit high frequency words and phrases and their spellings eg prepositions, family members, rooms in the house, places in town, school subjects.
- Practise high frequency verbs eg *je joue, je vais, j'aime*.
- Practise frequency and time expressions eg usually, today, every day, tomorrow, yesterday, last, next etc. and practice writing sentences using them with the appropriate time frame eg *Tous les jours je.... La semaine dernière j'ai/je suis.... Demain je vais....*
- Remember to conjugate the verb where required rather than leaving it in the infinitive.
- Check carefully that all aspects of the translation have been addressed. For example prepositions such as *au foot, dans la chambre, au parc, en bus, au marché*
- Proofread your work by looking out for specific issues eg verb endings, plurals/genders, spellings, omissions.
- Do everything that you can within the task, even if only a few words, in order to gain access to some marks.

## Question 4

For this question, there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 90 words in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points must be addressed, but there is no need for equal coverage of the bullets. All students approached this question well, with many able to produce extended pieces of writing with developed responses. They were aware of the need to produce three time frames and express at least two opinions and, for the most part, were successful in achieving this. As in previous series, students were less successful if they incorrectly interpreted or omitted bullet points or if they used incorrect time frames.

## Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: Coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Students need to be reminded that coverage of bullet points is key, as misinterpreting or omitting even one means that the award of a mark above 6 is impossible, given that for the award of marks in the range 7 – 10, all aspects of the task must be covered. In addition, inaccuracy and therefore lack of clarity of communication (referred to as 'lapses') can impact negatively on marks awarded. Students also need to be aware that in addressing the bullet points, they should avoid using the possessive adjectives '*votre*' or '*vos*' in their responses, as this can negate the message. Although students were aware of the need to produce three time frames, as in previous series there was occasionally some mismatch between the time markers in bullet points three 3 and 4 and the time frame or verb form produced in the response, which also negated the message.

## Question 4.1

This question was generally completed well. It was a topic with which students were familiar and they were able to produce extended pieces of writing. On the whole, students were able to produce a range of opinions and time frames. Bullet point 1 '*la musique que vous écoutez en ce moment*' provided many students with the opportunity to develop detailed responses and the vast majority effectively included opinions in their responses to this bullet point. Bullet point 2 '*votre film favori*' was also well covered. Most students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4. However, as in previous series, where there were less successful responses, this was because some students used

inappropriate verb formations with the time markers ‘*un samedi récent*’ and ‘*vos futurs projets*’ and therefore did not successfully refer to the required time frames.

### Question 4.2

This question was also completed well on the whole as it was also a topic with which students were familiar and the vast majority of students were able to produce extended pieces of writing. As with 4.1, most students were able to produce a range of opinions and time frames. Bullet point 1 ‘*une destination de vacances que vous aimez*’ elicited a detailed response with a variety of opinions. However, there was occasional confusion between the nationality/language and the country eg. ‘*France/français*’. Bullet point 2 was not always successfully addressed given that the vocabulary item ‘*la météo*’ was sometimes unknown and was either omitted or misinterpreted. A number of students made reference to methods of transport maybe because they read ‘*météo*’ as ‘*métro*’. Most students responded well to bullet points 3 and 4. However, as in 4.1, where there were less successful responses, this was because some students used inappropriate verb formations with the time markers ‘*l’année dernière*’ and ‘*à l’avenir*’ and therefore did not successfully refer to the required time frames.

### Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy. As in previous series, the following was seen relating to the successful inclusion of variety and complexity of language: different persons of the verb, synonyms ‘*j’adore, j’aime, j’apprécie, je préfère*’, infinitive constructions, a variety of adjectives, connectives, intensifiers, negatives, use of subordinate clauses, relative pronouns, and a variety of tenses including subjunctives. As in previous series, at this tier, simple expression was often the most successful. Some students had evidently been taught set structures by teachers and were determined to include these, with varying degrees of success. These complex pre-learnt structures such as subjunctive phrases or specific idiomatic expressions, were not always coherent and created lapses. As in previous series, less successful language also included inaccurate tense formation and the inappropriate use of the infinitive.

### Advice to students

- Aim to write roughly the suggested number of words. Students who wrote approx. 90 words in clear sentences were more successful than students who wrote 3 or 4 times that amount but made more errors.
- Choose the question where you know what all the bullet points mean.
- Mention all the of the bullet points. Attempt to write something about them rather than omitting them. Tick off the bullet points in the rubric once they have been addressed.
- Check each bullet point to make sure you know which ones require reference to the PAST or FUTURE.
- Look for clues in the bullet points (*normalement, récent, mémorable, projets pour l’avenir, l’année prochaine...*) Use the time markers in the bullet points and include them in your response eg ‘*l’année dernière, à l’avenir*’.
- Practise writing in three different tenses. Pick a theme/subject and write the same sentence in 3 tenses: ‘*D’habitude/normalement..... La semaine dernière/hier .... À l’avenir/ le weekend prochain.....*’
- Practise manipulation of possessive adjectives ‘*votre/vos*’ to ‘*mon/ma/mes*’.

- Focus on simple but correct verb formations (*je joue, j'ai joué, je jouerai, je voudrais jouer*).
- Create short lists of varied vocabulary (different adjectives, connectives etc.).

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.