

## **ENGLISH LANGUAGE 2**

### **1. GENERAL COMMENTS**

The standard of the paper compared favourably with that of previous years. The questions were well crafted and topical enough to elicit favourable responses from candidates.

Generally, the performance of candidates was not impressive as it fell woefully below expectation although there were few cases of brilliant scripts.

### **2. A SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' STRENGTHS**

#### **(1) Language**

The good candidates wrote remarkably good English. They showed a reasonably good control over grammar, tense, punctuation and spelling. Sentence construction was also good. Some of the candidates paid attention to pertinent register, that is, appropriate choice of vocabulary in the essays.

#### **(2) Subject Matter**

The good candidates attempted to discuss the points advanced to an appreciable level to score good marks for the content aspect of the essays. They drew on their own evidence of transfer of knowledge from other subject areas such as ICT and Social Studies.

#### **(3) Length of Essays**

Most of the good candidates wrote full length essays with adequate content. Unlike in previous years when candidates lost marks in respect of paucity of content and unusually very short essays, this year there was a great deal of improvement.

#### **(4) Rubrics**

In many cases, the rubrics were correctly interpreted unlike in previous years when candidates would not pay close attention to instructions or wrote essays which were off point.

### **3. A SUMMARY OF CANDIDATES' WEAKNESSES**

(1) Candidates' expression was generally very poor; in fact, some of the scripts were unintelligible. Most of the candidates simply lacked the ability to construct simple readable sentences. Those who managed to write somewhat readable sentences had grammatical and expressional errors to contend with.

- (2) Candidates had very poor knowledge of punctuation and general basic grammar, especially in the area of Agreement (Concord). Most of the candidates are not at home with basics of English Language such as tense, punctuation, grammatical structures, spelling, word amalgamation and division, capitalization and paragraphing.
- (3) Candidates were not particular with the classes of words of the given words in the vocabulary substitution exercise and therefore provided words of different classes in their responses.

#### **4. SUGGESTED REMEDIES**

- (1) The teaching and learning of the English Language should be approached with more seriousness.
- (2) Schools should encourage more oral and written exercises and a lot of homework on basic grammatical structures and tenses.
- (3) Schools should encourage more library reading activities as essential parts of the curriculum. Emphasis should be laid on reading for linguistic features and not just reading for pleasure.
- (4) Vocabulary enhancement activities should be stepped up. Activities such as quizzes, dictation, debates should be encouraged actively among students.
- (5) Students should be discriminatory with the expressions they learn from the media.

#### **5. DETAILED COMMENTS**

##### **Question 1**

**You have been offered admission to a Senior High School to pursue a programme which you do not like. Write to the headmaster of the school stating at least two reasons why you want the programme changed.**

This question was a test in formal letter writing. The candidate was expected to write to the headmaster of the school that has offered him/her admission requesting that the programme offered him/her be changed with reasons. The candidate was expected to demonstrate knowledge of the format and linguistic features of this type of writing and to combine these with a discussion of why the preferred one programme to another and issues raised centred around the difficulty or otherwise of a particular programme, the career openings available to the candidate after school or for further studies, etc.

Most of the candidates who attempted this question did quite well bringing out salient points. However, the candidates did not produce the formality of language and politeness of expression and register that are hallmarks of an official letter. Instead there were long

introductory pleasantries and the bodies of the letters degenerated into a lot of colloquialism associated with informal letters.

Some candidates misunderstood the term “programme” to be a “function”. Others also did not mention the particular programmes they were offered and the particular ones they wanted to offer.

## **Question 2**

**Write an article to be published in a national newspaper on why every school should have a library.**

This question was a test in article-writing. The candidate was expected to show a clear understanding of the demands of the topic, namely, the importance of libraries in schools and combine this with the stylistic features of this expository type of writing to produce a readable composition.

Most of the candidates who answered this question wrote the benefits of a library to both students and teachers. Their answers stated, clearly, how a school library would make learning and teaching easier and also improve upon the academic performance of students.

Some of the candidates however, failed to come to grips with the main issues. They managed to give only some trite reasons such as libraries being places where students could have silence and as places where books could be borrowed.

The language type expected in this type of writing is the formal type where slang and colloquialism is out of place. However, few candidates displayed lack of knowledge of these aspects and, therefore, could not satisfy the marking scheme in this regard.

## **Question 3**

**Write the speech you would give at your school’s graduation day on, “The school’s achievements and failures in the academic year”.**

This was a test in speech-writing. The candidate was expected to identify what to him/her were achievements and failures of his school in a particular year. There should be a logical presentation of what the achievements were and the failures. At least two achievements and one failure was expected.

This question was answered quite well by the very good candidates. They wrote about various areas of school life such as academic performance, discipline, provision or absence of learning and teaching materials and sporting activities.

Some candidates wrote more on the failure than on the achievements. Some others also took “failure” to mean the “failure of students in their examinations”, and therefore, wrote about why students failed.

#### **Question 4 - Comprehension**

The comprehension passage had a high interest level for most candidates. Consequently, the performance, in most cases, was very encouraging with most candidates scoring above average marks.

The identifiable problem was the questions that dealt with identifying a part of speech that related to Fatimah and the word explanation task.

Candidates failed to identify an adjective. They could not distinguish between a single grammatical category such as ‘adjective’ and a sentence. Therefore, instead of providing a single adjective, they resorted to providing sentences and phrases.

In the case of sub question (f) (vocabulary substitution) candidates could not provide the right words to replace the given words. Additionally, vocabulary items suggested by candidates did not fit their contexts in all the aspects of **meaning, grammar, tense** and **collocation**. These are skills that teachers should stress during reading and comprehension lessons.