Cambridge IGCSE

Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/32**

Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition **February/March 2015**

READING BOOKLET INSERT

2 hours

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READ THESE INSTRUCTIONS FIRST

This Reading Booklet Insert contains the reading passage for use with **Section 1**, **Question 1** on the Question Paper.

You may annotate this Insert and use the blank spaces for planning. This Insert is **not** assessed by the Examiner.

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Read the passage carefully, and then answer **Section 1**, **Question 1** on the Question Paper.

In this humorous newspaper article, the writer voices some of their concerns about what children experience when they go to school.

All of us wrap up our children when it's cold. We put them on booster seats in the car and make them wear helmets when they're on a bicycle. We strive constantly to keep them out of harm's way, and then we send them off to school so they can be tortured.

I suppose we all think, rather naively, that school today is exactly the same as school back in our day, except that children are now allowed calculators. I'm afraid not. School today is completely different. There's very little bullying, and no smoking behind the bike sheds because there's no time, not when you need to be fluent in 17 languages by age four and you've got those pesky quadratic cosines to finish off by break. I'm not kidding. I do not understand any of my son's maths homework. And what's more, I bet he knows more about advanced mathematics now, at the age of 10, than most of the NASA scientists did when they put Armstrong on the moon.

My daughter, who already knows Latin better than Julius Caesar, comes home from school at 18.00 every night, bleary eyed from the pressure. But before she can collapse into bed she has to do four half-hour pieces of homework. Supper? Internet? A bit of light texting? Forget it. On the basis that a parent can only be as happy as their least happy child, this makes me pretty miserable. She's not alone, either. I read the other day that a four-year-old child had been diagnosed with 'stress' and I'm not surprised. Perhaps she'd been made to miss her playtime so she could finish her paper on how the gross domestic product of Iceland was affected by EU fish quotas.

A child I know was sent home from school recently with a note saying that by the age of 10 she really should have a rudimentary grasp of quantum physics and that because she didn't she must have some extra tuition. Unfortunately, on the back of this hurriedly written note the teacher had been doing some sums. There was a list of every child who was having extra lessons, how much each parent was paying and at the end, under the total he'd written, 'Yippee'.

When I was at school I remember being told that if I spelt my name properly on my examination paper I'd be halfway there. Exams were a hiccup in the day, not the be-all and end-all of absolutely everything. Based on those exams, we now have 'league tables', a handy guide to how well each school performs. But publishing a list of 'best schools' purely on the grounds of academic achievement is idiotic. It tells you nothing.

Recently, I made a decision on which secondary school my children will attend. I chose it because I know several people who've been there, and they loved it. I chose it because the children I saw mooching from lesson to lesson were mostly smiling. I chose it because it 'felt' right.

Of course, I want my children to leave school with a basic academic foundation. But more than that I want them to learn social skills so they can interact properly with other human beings. I want them to learn to play the guitar. I want them to enjoy school, to have fun. I can't bear the thought of paying a small fortune every year so they can be put on a treadmill. School is supposed to prepare a person for life, not wear them out. This is what we all seem to have forgotten.

Yes, we must do everything we can to keep our children safe. But we should also do everything we can to make them happy as well.

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