Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/32**

Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition **May/June 2014**

READING BOOKLET INSERT

2 hours

5467644588-I

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.

DC (RCL (JDA)) 81739/3
© UCLES 2014

BLANK PAGE

© UCLES 2014

Read the following article carefully, and then answer Question 1 on the Question Paper.

This article is taken from a local newspaper.

Pupil Representation: Do we *really* care what students think?

The once-fashionable idea of giving pupils a say in how their schools are run is being challenged by a recently appointed local head teacher as 'mere lip service to student participation.' As is now common in many schools, pupils in Mr Aziz's school elect representatives from each year group to attend meetings and discuss their concerns with teachers and governors. But Mr Aziz believes that these student councils do more harm than good, draining the school's time and teachers' energies on a fake body whose decisions do not, and should not, influence children's education. 'The misguided belief that young people should be able to restrict the actions of experienced educators is simply ludicrous,' he says. 'We're accountable to their parents to give them the best education we can, not to consult them at every stage about issues which they don't understand.'

One pupil, Sofia, who campaigned enthusiastically over a whole term for the votes of her Year 11 peers last year, gave Mr Aziz some unexpected support. 'The student council meets every now and again, when the school wants to give the impression that they care about what we think, but nothing ever happens. We spent ages at home drawing up a report on the improvements that we wanted to see in the school – sensible things like more gym equipment and a wider curriculum. The school authorities listened politely but the report was quietly shelved. Our teachers were even irritated that our homework was late because of all the planning involved!' Sofia's dad also had misgivings. 'We selected this school for its solid academic track record. My daughter's here to learn – and I'm paying a lot for that,' he added wryly.

In some schools, teachers help elected pupils to make realistic decisions and work together for the good of the school. Mrs Smith, an English teacher in a school where a student council has recently been established, acts as a facilitator in each meeting and is optimistic about what can be achieved. She believes that pupils are more willing to invest their time and work hard in schools where their voice is heard: 'Kids learn better when their point of view is respected – every decent teacher knows that.' Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their ideas and to work with the school to implement them in practical ways, if they are accepted. One parent even attributes her son's renewed interest in learning to the experience he had as a pupil representative on his student council, helping to plan a new science building and grappling with budgets. 'His maths teacher was asked to explain the financial implications of their decisions to the pupil representatives. He said it was the only maths lesson he'd ever enjoyed because it mattered to him and his friends,' she says. Perhaps the bright, well-designed science block is testament to the 'pupil power' that can be harnessed by schools willing to listen to their pupils.

Mr Aziz says that it makes sense to be concerned about individual students' worries and his door is always open to those who are unhappy about any aspect of school life. 'And I encourage teachers to listen to their pupils and pass on any concerns to me,' he said. 'But it's simply foolish to pretend that an ill-disciplined group of children, elected in some glorified popularity contest, should spend their formative years in pointless meetings, airing their grievances. One pupil even told me the older representatives in the School Council should be consulted on teacher appointments! I have twenty years' experience to ensure that students leave with good academic results and the skills to become useful adults. I don't need fifteen and sixteen-year-olds to tell me how to do that.'

The days of the elected student council may be numbered in this school. The question of whether students *can* help in the running of their schools is only one aspect of the debate, however. Mr Aziz wants to talk about whether they *should*!

© UCLES 2014

BLANK PAGE

Permission to reproduce items where third-party owned material protected by copyright is included has been sought and cleared where possible. Every reasonable effort has been made by the publisher (UCLES) to trace copyright holders, but if any items requiring clearance have unwittingly been included, the publisher will be pleased to make amends at the earliest possible opportunity.

Cambridge International Examinations is part of the Cambridge Assessment Group. Cambridge Assessment is the brand name of University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), which is itself a department of the University of Cambridge.

© UCLES 2014