Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/31**

Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition **May/June 2017**

2 hours

READING BOOKLET INSERT

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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 Reading Booklet Insert and use the blank spaces for planning.
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Read the passage carefully, and then answer **Question 1** on the Question Paper.

The passage below is the transcript of a radio programme called 'Education Matters'. In it, the programme presenter interviews a teacher who has worked in many different countries about the issue of school uniform.

Presenter: Good morning. I'd like to introduce my guest, Maria Schindler, to the programme today. Maria has just retired from a long career teaching in schools in different parts of the world for nearly three decades. She's well qualified, therefore, to give us her informed views on the issue of school uniform, today's topic for discussion. Maria, you've had experience of working in schools with very varied approaches to school uniform. What kind of difference does school uniform make?

Maria: Well, it's not that straightforward. It's true that attitudes to school uniform differ very greatly from country to country but also from school to school within countries. I've taught in places where the prevailing view is that students have a right to free expression in their dress style which should be protected. It's viewed almost as a basic human right. In others, contravening strict uniform rules, even in a small way, can get a child expelled. Attitudes within countries have also changed considerably over the thirty years I've been teaching. When my own children were growing up in the UK in the 1980s it was rare for school uniform to be worn in primary schools, but now it's very common. Elsewhere the trend has gone in the opposite direction so it seems that opinions about the benefits or disadvantages of school uniform are mixed and research findings are equally inconclusive.

Presenter: Many people argue that requiring children, even little ones, to adhere to uniform rules teaches them valuable lessons which will stand them in good stead in adult life. They learn that it's important to fit in, to be a credit to their school. A line of clean and sparkling children, all dressed the same on their way to school, is a lovely sight – you have to admit!

Maria: Oh, a smart uniform can certainly encourage students to feel a sense of pride in the school, just like wearing the colours of your football team. Some headteachers I've worked with are even convinced that it combats bullying. The old argument that school uniform irons out the differences between rich and poor is sometimes true where rich kids would otherwise flaunt their designer gear over their poorer classmates. A lot depends on how and how strictly uniform rules are enforced. School uniform doesn't always encourage cohesion and unity in a school where teachers have to waste time fussing about shirts not tucked in, the length of a skirt or whether jewellery is small and discreet enough to be allowed under ambiguous rules. These daily disagreements can undermine the relationship between teacher and student.

Presenter: But surely students aren't supposed to like their uniforms! Given the choice, they'd wear outlandish fashions and silly hairstyles which would bring the school into disrepute. I've heard that gangs can also impose their own rules of dress if schools don't. Anyway, young people have their weekends to 'express themselves', don't they?

Maria: That's not my experience in countries and schools where there's no strong tradition of school uniforms. Some have nominal requirements: 'clean, comfortable and covered up' was a basic rule which seemed to work reasonably well in one school I worked in. In other schools there were those who turned up in the kind of garb I didn't really appreciate, but I taught them just the same and some were outstanding students – sharp, original thinkers, some of them.

Presenter: That's interesting. But you'd agree, I'm sure, that a degree of conformity and even obedience is necessary for a school to be effective. School uniform helps to create that kind of atmosphere, don't you think? Adults guide young people in every aspect of their preparation for adult life. We teach them how to conduct themselves in other ways – why not how to dress appropriately?

Maria: I agree that we have a wider responsibility to students than just to fill their heads with knowledge. However, the kinds of dress codes that apply in workplaces these days are more diverse and often less formal than they used to be. I wonder how appropriate the style of some of the more elaborate

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uniforms is when students venture into the real world? In my experience, there are many different reasons why schools adopt or don't adopt rules about dress. Some students find uniforms oppressive and some simply conform with little argument. It would be very interesting to hear from young people themselves and see what they make of our discussions, wouldn't it?

Presenter: It certainly would, Maria! I'm sure our listeners will have plenty to say about this subject.

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