Cambridge IGCSE

Cambridge International Examinations
Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/33**

Paper 3 Directed Writing and Composition **May/June 2018**

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.

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

Can adults praise children too much?

The following passage is an article from a magazine about education, and it explores the issue of praise.

Most parents and teachers agree that praise is critical to developing children's self-esteem, so the more praise the better. Right?

Not necessarily, according to some psychologists and teachers. Praising everything children do does not build self-esteem. Eventually the praise becomes meaningless. Instead of continually praising students, teachers should encourage specific improvements in their students' work. Here experts debate the question: 'To praise or not to praise?'

Although praise is obviously good for children, if adults applaud everything children do, some child professionals say that the praise can eventually lose its effect or create 'approval junkies', youngsters who constantly seek praise. As one counsellor in a large secondary school said of such students, 'Their self-worth is based on what others say, and that is not a healthy sort of self-esteem. These students can't do anything unless they are praised for it.'

Rather than responding to all of children's work with phrases such as 'Good job!' or 'Nice work!', some researchers advise that teachers should consider using comments that pinpoint weaknesses and flaws which need attention.

The common notion is that children with high self-esteem will be happier and perform better in school and later in life and that praise is one route to achieving this. However, one psychologist, Dr Davies, claims that self-esteem does not make children happier, achieve more, or become more capable and competent, although it does help them to deal with stressful situations and to build some resilience.

Identifying a child's strengths and developing those strengths helps build confidence more than constant praise does, according to Dr Davies. Praise also loses its effect if the praise is the same for all the students. For example, if all the students in a class are told their paintings are great and students know some are better than others, the praise will lose its significance.

'Honest feedback, delivered sensitively, is far more beneficial in the long run than empty praise,' says Dr Davies. 'Adults have got into the habit of not telling children when they are wrong, and that will not help them cope with adversity when they are adults. That's not how the real world works.'

Although the idea that the praise which children receive should be more selective and specific is not new, it is starting to overtake the notion that more praise is always better. 'Blanket, automatic, or empty praise is useless and children easily see through it,' says Benjamin Li, another expert researching this area. 'The praise has to be grounded in something real.' However, he wouldn't want to see the pendulum swing back to the other extreme, where teachers withhold praise for genuine accomplishments.

Not everyone, though, agrees that less praise is more beneficial. Kirsten Xiang, another psychologist, says that given a choice, she would always opt for giving children more praise. 'My concern is that people will not praise children at all. I have adult patients who report that they were not praised as children. If I have to err, I would err on the side of over-praising.'

Xiang does admit there is a possibility that too much praise could make children jaded and less prepared for the rigours of adult life. 'If a child has been working hard on vocabulary and comes home with an A, it is appropriate to praise and point out the connection with hard work,' she says. 'But if the child normally does well in vocabulary, there is no need to be effusive.'

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Despite what some researchers say, Stephanie Marchant, a teacher in a school for children with learning difficulties, says she can see the impact of praise on students every day. 'I'm like a cheerleader all day. The praise keeps them going. When they hear 'you're wonderful', 'good job', or 'you're so smart', it's always meaningful – I can tell by the looks on their faces. They are more likely to try harder or take risks in their learning.' That kind of constant encouragement might not be as important in a mainstream class, Marchant says, but she believes all children benefit from steady praise. 'I would err on the side of praising more.'

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