GCSE
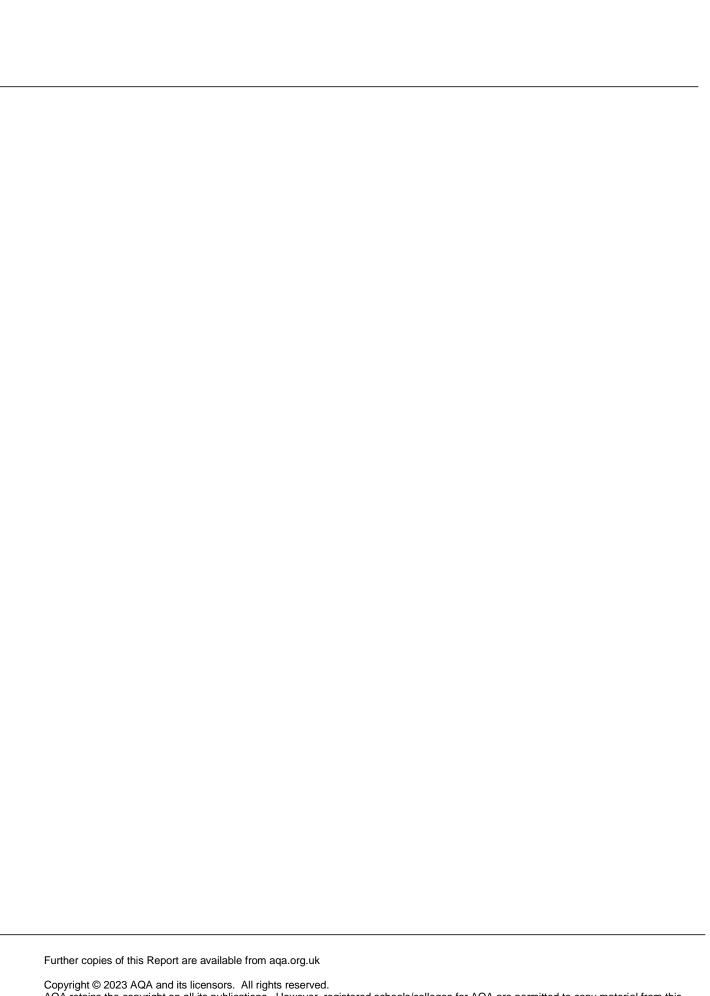# CHINESE (MANDARIN)

8673/WF Paper 4 Writing Foundation Tier
Report on the Examination

General Comments

Changes were made to the 2023 papers to reflect the removal of the regulatory requirement to test vocabulary outside of the published vocabulary list.

It was good to see another increase in the number of candidates for the examination this year. Many positive responses were seen, demonstrating a range of different levels of performance. Unlike in past years, students who took this paper this year were entered at the appropriate tier. There was strong evidence that students had sufficient knowledge both of the vocabulary and grammar needed to respond to the tasks set.

Question 1 proved challenging to most students and only a small number of students scored decent marks. In Question 2, a very even performance was seen and the responses were well spread across the mark range. Some more able students exceeded the recommended word count, whilst others struggled to meet it. Time frames were tested in questions 3 and 4 and, again, there was evidence that a good number of students were confident in this area. Where a student's grammatical knowledge was lacking this would invariably lead to some loss of clarity, which had a negative impact on communication and quality of language.

Whilst celebrating the good performances of many students, it was disappointing to see quite a few students not attempting a response to Question 3. More students chose Question 04.2 than 04.1. A few scripts were written only in pinyin, so language marks suffered. Students need to be reminded that the use of pinyin should be a last resort and only used sparingly.

Question 1

There was quite a mixed response to this question. Most pupils were able to secure some marks. Good answers were both relevant to the picture and used full sentences with correct measure words, adjectives and verbs, e.g. 照片里有五个人, 他们在海边 and 他们在走路. Some students struggled with the vocabulary 照片，and simply wrote 五个人, which scored half marks. A few weaker students only wrote a single word response, eg 爸爸 or 妈妈, which could not be credited. Also, some students wrote content that did not describe what was actually shown in the photo, eg 他们不在家. Students should bear in mind that they must write sentences that refer to what is in the photo and not to what is not in it.

Advice to students

- Learn the characters 照片里有….
- Make sure you write full sentences, with a subject, verb and an object.
- Write about elements in the photo that you are most sure that you know the Chinese characters for.
- Keep sentences short and simple to ensure you communicate a clear message.

Question 2

Teachers are reminded that there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 30 characters in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points are compulsory and must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of each bullet point. As mentioned in the General Comments, this question differentiated well. Some more able students gave detailed responses including different time frames, although this is not required by the task. Overall, most responses were brief, but met the required word count.

Content

Most students were able to cover all bullet points required, but with difffering levels of clarity of communication. Bullet points one and two provided the best responses. Good examples were 我最喜欢的菜是鱼 and 我喜欢吃面条因为好吃. The most commonly seen places relating to bullet point three were 学校, 家 and 饭馆. Many students wrote beyond the required 30 characters, though the quality of both complex and basic characters was variable. Bullet point four proved to be challenging as a large number of students were not familiar with frequency words.

Quality of language

In order to score well for Quality of language students have to show a range of structures, but there is no requirement for complexity in this question. A few strong students were able to use a variety of vocabulary and structures, such as, 因为, 又…又…, etc. Students demonstrated a solid command of vocabulary relating to the topic and almost everyone was able to write 米饭, 肉 and 好吃. Common frequency words seen were 每个星期五, 常常 and 天天/每, which was very encouraging. There were errors in character writing even in more common vocabulary, e.g. 喜欢，常常, 饺子, 饭, 面 and 好吃. Furthermore, word order in sentences with frequency time words and location expressions was often incorrect.

Advice to students

- Refer to all bullet points. Always attempt to respond to a bullet point rather than omitting it.

- Tick off the bullet points in the question rubric once you have addressed them.

- Practise writing the verbs 是, 有, 喜欢 and the stative verb 很.

- Learn to write a few common verb-adjectives.

Question 3

For this question there are 5 marks for Conveying key messages and 5 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Given that the level of demand was aimed at covering Grades 1 to 5, the question differentiated well, with nearly all students able to score some marks.

The sentences were divided into 12 key messages, as shown in the table below. As mentioned above, quite a lot of students left some sentences unattempted, which makes it quite hard to comment on.

Conveying key messages

Today	Best answered in the whole translation, with occasional errors in character writing.
is very cold.	Answers were mixed. A common error was 是很冷.
I have a	This was translated very well.
red mobile phone.	Mixed responses were seen; most struggled using 的 correctly.
Her friend	This was responded to very well. A few students wrote 月友 instead of 朋友.
went to France	Students handled this well, but a few missed out 了. This resulted in a loss of marks if 上个星期六 was not translated correctly.
last Saturday.	Students found this challenging, confusing 上 or 下.
Music	This was translated well.
is more interesting than	Students found this demanding.
history.	This was translated well.
My room	Students found this quite challenging.
does not have a television.	Students often used 不有 instead of 没有, indicating the past tense.

Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures

There is usually a direct correlation between the mark for Key messages and the mark for Application of grammar. However, if the student has been credited for several key messages despite poor character writing or use of pinyin, then the mark for Application of grammatical knowledge may be lower than the mark for Key messages, and if the mark for Key messages has been affected due to a number of relatively minor errors, then it could be higher.

Advice to students

- Practise writing high frequency words and phrases.
- Learn to write expressions linked to past time frames.
- Check carefully that you do not accidently miss out any parts of the translation.
- If you are not sure how to write a character, it is better to use pinyin rather than leave it out altogether.

Question 4

For this question, there are 10 marks for Content and 6 marks for Quality of Language. Students are required to write approximately 75 characters in total about four different bullet points. All bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of each bullet point.

Question 04.2 was the more popular choice. A small number of students dealt with the questions confidently, including all four bullet points and developing their responses by giving opinions and using different time frames. Other students produced only a very limited, patchy piece of writing, or even left the question unattempted.

Content

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. Most students wrote more than 75 characters and attempted all four bullet points. Occasionally, a bullet point seemed to be misunderstood, which meant that the student could not be awarded four marks or more for Content. For this tier, relevance and clarity were often the barriers preventing students from achieving higher marks for this category.

Question 04.1

Fewer pupils chose this task compared with Question 04.2. This might have been because the majority of students were under the impression that the vocabulary for this topic would be challenging. 'Birthday' and 'Chinese New Year' were popular topics when describing celebrations when responding to bullet points one and two. Students answered bullet point three well, providing a range of opinions, though mostly using common adjectives such as 好玩儿 and 有意思. Some students used a future time expression when responding to bullet point four, e.g. 上个生日;上年生日 instead of 明年生日 or 下一个生日.
Overall, there was a good spread of marks across the papers.

Question 04.2

The performance on this question was better than that on Question 04.1. A wider range of responses was seen. For bullet point one, it was clear that many students knew the key vocabulary 附近 or 近 but few pupils knew how to apply the structure accurately, so could not communicate a clear response, e.g. 我的学校离我家很近 or 我的学校在我家附近. Nevertheless, it was good to see that some more able students responded effectively by combining a means of transport with a duration of time expression. Students' performances in bullet points two and three were very pleasing, showing a solid command of the vocabulary required. Although 好玩儿 and 有意思 were most commonly used to express opinions, some students also used more interesting adjectives, such as 好看, 漂亮 or 聪明 for bullet point two and 难 or 有用 for bullet point three. For bullet point four, many students responded with some relevant information, e.g. a subject, sport or activity related to the school context, which was very heartening.

Quality of language

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy. Each of the bullet points for both questions required students to use a variety of vocabulary because of the different nature of each task. Each one allowed students to choose language which they could use confidently.

In order to score in the top band for Quality of language, there had to be successful reference to events in the present, past and future. One bullet point in each question required the use of a past time frame and one required a future time frame.

It was fantastic to see that a number of students were able to apply all three time frames and complex structures, eg 最喜欢, 因为, 又……又……, 不但/而且 and the superlative 最 appropriately. Subordinate clauses such as 觉得 and 认为 were commonly used. Although there were some minor errors in character writing, the intended meaning was mostly clear. Surprisingly, quite a number of students were not able to write 老师 or school subjects correctly in this question. It was regrettable that a small number of students left the question unattempted; it is always best to attempt a question in order to gain some marks.

Advice to students

- Refer to all bullet points.
- Tick off the bullet points in the question rubric once they have been covered.
- Make sure you include opinions using 我觉得, 我认为 or any relevant verb-adjectives.
- Identify which bullet points target the different time frames.
- Always include the particle 了 when referring to past actions, and 要, 想, etc. for the future time frame.
- Check word order.
- Write in pinyin rather than leave a blank space if you are unsure of how to write a particular character.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.