# GCSE
# **CHINESE (MANDARIN)**
8673/WH Paper 4 Writing Higher Tier
Report on the Examination

8673/WH
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Version: 1.0

**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.*

There was a very positive response to this year's Chinese Writing paper, with a larger entry than last year. The paper differentiated very well, in that students were able to score marks in all questions in the paper. The vast majority of students had been entered appropriately for this tier. The quality of work seen in the overlap questions was of a higher standard than at Foundation tier.

The standard of responses was varied, ranging from short responses with simple sentences and occasional opinions through to detailed and generally accurate responses using a variety of vocabulary, structures and time frames, with opinions and justifications where appropriate. Compared to previous years, the majority of students gave answers of an appropriate length, which avoided unnecessary errors that might have occurred in overly extended responses.

Where students failed to score marks it was generally due to inaccuracies that caused a delay in communicating the message. The usual reasons for this were either incorrect word order or inaccurate character writing leading to ambiguity. Unnecessarily long responses created the potential for increased inaccuracy. Another barrier to achievement was the omission or misinterpretation of the bullet points in Questions 1 and 2. Looking forward, students need to be reminded again to double check that they have covered the content fully.

**Question 1**

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. The standard of work at this tier was generally very good, with many students able to provide extended responses that demonstrated their ability to develop ideas, express opinions and refer to different time frames.

**Content**

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: coverage of the bullet points, development of ideas, clarity of communication and expression of opinions. The vast majority of students wrote more than 75 characters, which enabled them to give a lot of information, fulfilling the higher bands for this category. Students need to be reminded that coverage of bullet points is key. Occasionally a bullet point appeared to have been misunderstood, which meant that the student could not be awarded four marks or more for Content. In some cases, it was very obvious that the students were native speakers, who had excellent command of the language. However, these students sometimes neglected to fulfil the requirements of the task, thereby failing to gain marks. In order to score 7 marks or more for Content, information related to all four bullet points must be conveyed. Lapses in accuracy which have a bearing on communication could also contribute to a lower mark for Content.

**Question 01.1**

This question was less popular than Question 01.2. This might have been because the majority of students were under the impression that the vocabulary for this topic would be challenging. In fact, most students who chose this question performed very well. The first two bullet points were answered best. Chinese New Year (春节/中国新年) and birthdays (生日) were popular choices for celebrations. Some brief responses to bullet point three (their views about the celebration) were

seen, such as 春节很累 or 生日很好玩, without providing more detailed information.  Students would have achieved higher marks for bullet point four if they had mentioned their birthday or provided clear information that the plan was for their birthday next year.

**Question 01.2**

A significantly higher number of students chose to answer this question, probably because study/life at school is a familiar topic.  Again, strong performances were seen with lots of detailed and extended pieces of writing.  It was obvious that the majority of students were very confident in handling bullet points two and three as they were responded to best.  Lots of students effectively and clearly expressed their opinions about a teacher or a lesson with lots of detail.  Some students found bullet point one  challenging; more able candiates were able to use the 离 structure with an appropriate verb-adjective (很远 or 很近).  Additionally, students who included the 'from...to...' structure, e.g. 从我家到学校只要二十分钟, to indicate the distance between school and home were also credited with the content mark for this bullet point.  It was regrettable to see a few students struggling with this bullet point and therefore omitting it altogether.  Bullet point four was handled well by most students.

**Quality of language**

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language, attempts at complexity, time frames and accuracy.  In relation to the first three elements, the following were seen: successful references to two or three time frames and successful use of complex structures including a range of connectives, e.g. 虽然…但是…, 不仅…而且…, 因为…所以, 又…又…, 除了…以外…, 对…感兴趣, modified verb-adjectives, use of subordinate clauses such as 我觉得, 我认为, comparision 比 and superlatives 最.  A range of verb-adjectives, such as 友好, 有用, 有意思, 好玩, 漂亮 and 好看 were used to describe a teacher or a lesson.  Some more able students used 教得好, 幽默 or 乐于帮助我, which was good to see.  Occasionally, the verb-adjectives were not used correctly, for instance, 有用 was used to describe a teacher.

Most students this year were fully aware of the need to include three time frames in their answers.  For example, in question 01.2, most students used present-tense time words, i.e. 每天, 每天早上 etc. to reflect the present time frame of bullet point one.  For past time events, almost all students successfully used 了 after the relevant verb and most students successfully used time expressions, such as 昨天, 上个星期, 上个月, 最近, 上一节课, etc.  Similarly, there were lots of good examples of future time frames, with almost all students successfully using auxiliary verbs such as 想/要/打算 before the relevant verb.  Whilst it was pleasing to see these positive responses, the use of incorrect characters sometimes affected the clarity of the message.  For example, quite a lot of students wrote 昨年, 下年, 下一个年, 上年,去年 instead of 明年.  Other common errors were the confusing use of incorrect time phrases with auxiliary verbs and/or the particle 了, which caused ambiguities in comprehension, e.g. 去年生日, 我打算去法国. Sentences like 昨天有了数学课 or 是了有意思 were also frequently seen.

**Advice to students**

- Refer to all bullet points.
- Tick off the bullet points in the question rubric once they have been covered.
- Identify which bullet points target the different time frames and check that your time word and verb formation are accurate.

- Make sure you include opinions as required by the task.
- Write in pinyin rather than leave a blank space if you are unsure of how to write a particular character.

**Question 2**

For this question, there are 15 marks for Content, 12 marks for Range of Language and 5 marks for Accuracy.  Students write approximately 125 characters in total, about two different bullet points.  Both bullet points must be covered, but there is no need for equal coverage of each.  More students chose Question 02.2 than Question 02.1.  The range of the responses varied from a fully fluent response to the bullet points using language that was largely accurate and varied, to content that was not always relevant, often repetitive, and not always easily understood.  Students need to be reminded that, in order to avoid losing marks, they should tailor their knowledge to suit the demands of the tasks, rather than reproduce pre-learnt language, which might not be totally relevant.

**Content**

The criteria for assessment focus on four elements: relevance and detail (implicit in this is coverage of both bullet points), amount of information conveyed, clarity of communication and expression and justification of opinions.  A large number of students wrote more than 125 characters and a number of students wrote greatly in excess of the required wordage.  Unfortunately, for some of these students, this led to the inclusion of a great deal of irrelevant information and also compounded the inaccuracies in their language, which had a detrimental effect on their mark for Communication as well as on the mark for  Language.

As mentioned above, more students chose to answer Question 02.2, perhaps because jobs is a more familiar topic for most students than environment.  It was clear that some students had difficulties with the vocabulary item 兼职 (part-time), and were therefore not able to adequately refer to bullet point one in the question.  It is important that students  learn the skill of paraphrasing specific items of vocabulary when facing unfamiliar words in the future.

**Question 02.1**

The performance on this question was better than that on Question 02.2, despite the fact that few students chose it.  Many students successfully addressed bullet point one, discussing local environmental issues.  Some excellent responses were seen, e.g. 有很多空气污染, 河里的河水很脏 and 人们常常乱扔垃圾.  A number of students wrote about 有很多车/太多车 and 公园不干净.  It appeared that phrases such as 我住的地方 posed a challenge for some students. Whilst students handled bullet point one comfortably, a few students found bullet point two tricky.  It appears that these students lacked the vocabulary and structures needed to express their ideas.  Nonetheless, most students were still able to make suggestions such as 多走路, 少开车, 回收, 种树 and 捡垃圾, using their knowledge to produce a more creative response.

**Question 02.2**

As mentioned above, this question was more popular amongst students.  It was good to see that students were confident in responding to this topic and a lot of good responses were seen.  The writing ranged from fully relevant with lots of  clear detail to writing that was sometimes irrelevant or where communication broke down.  For bullet point one, most students were able to write about the pros and/or cons of pupils having a part-time job, justifying their opinions succcesfully, e.g.有钱可以

买东西, 赚钱非常有用/重要, 做兼职工作可以让我获得社会经验, 可以交更多新朋友, 兼职让我没有时间做作业 and 学习更重要.  However, quite a lot of students did not know how to write 兼职 or 义工 so left gaps.  It is essential that students equip themselves with the skill of adapting alternative vocabulary or paraphasing to express the key concepts of a task.

**Range of language**

The key features of the criteria for assessment here are variety of language and a confident ability to produce complex sentences.  Many students demonstrated the ability to use a good range of complex sentences, often successfully. 越来越..., 除了(以外)...还, ...的时候, 如果... 就… and the co-verbs 对 and 给  were all seen.  A few students used sequencing (第一, 第二) to produce well-structured and clear arguments.  Even weaker students were able to employ common linking words/connectives, such as 因为…所以…and 虽然…但是… However, there was a lack of variation in the use of appropriate vocabulary, particularly when it came to verb-adjectives.  Many students relied heavily on 好 and 有意思.

In both Questions 1 and 2, ambiguous communication was commonly caused by a lack of the key vocabulary needed. For example, in Question 1 many students were unable to use the expression 年轻人, instead employing incorrect terms such as 小人, 小个人,小年人 or 不老人.  Some students managed to use alternative expressions which were closer in meaning to the term 'young people', such as 学生 and 我们, which were accepted.

**Accuracy**

Lots of excellent work was seen during marking, where sentences were error-free even when attempting more complex structures.  Generally, the use of time words and verb formation were secure.  The majority of students were able to produce work worthy of 3 marks and above.  Common errors included word order, incorrect time expressions, inappropriate use of conjunctions and verb-adjectives and character writing errors.  Where students scored 2 marks and below, it normally reflected poor performance across all aspects of the criteria, with very limited and poor writing.  It is also worth noting that the criteria refer to style and register.  This was not generally an issue in the work seen.

**Advice to students**

- Read the bullet points and the scene-setting carefully, ensuring you know exactly what is required in the response.
- Ensure that what you write relates in some way to the bullet points.
- Try not to say things that are overly difficult or for which you do not know the vocabulary.  It is better to be simple and clear than complex and unclear.
- When you give an opinion, make sure you justify it.  Ensure there are at least two opinions with justifications in your writing.
- Write in pinyin rather than leave a blank space if you are unsure how to write a particular character.

**Question 3**

For this question, there are 6 marks for Conveying key messages and 6 marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures. Given that the level of demand of the messages was aimed at Grades 4 to 9, the question differentiated well with the vast majority of students able to score some marks.

The passage was divided into 13 key messages, as in the table below.

**Conveying key messages**

| | |
|---|---|
| I have a dog. | Well answered. Some pupils were not sure how to write the character 狗 correctly. |
| It is not only cute, | A bit mixed. Students were capable of writing the characters 不但, however, there were occasions when some students confused 不但 with 但是. |
| but also friendly. | Well answered. Good vocabulary like 友善 was seen. A common error was 有好. |
| Every evening I | This was generally translated well. However, some students wrote 免 instead of 晚. |
| take my younger sister | Well answered. A few students confused 妹 with 姐. |
| to the nearby park | Overall this was translated well, but some candiates found it challenging as they were not sure how to write 附近 or 旁边. |
| to walk our dog. | Very few students knew the word 遛狗; many were influenced by English and attempted 走路我的狗, 走狗 or 跑步狗 instead of using the correct structure 和/跟狗走路. |
| However, we did not go yesterday | Good responses were seen. Careless errors occurred due to using the pronoun 'we' instead of 我. Other typical errors seen were 作天/咋天 and 不去（了）/没去了. |
| because I was ill. | Students were confident with 因为, but quite a few struggled to express 'I was ill'. Errors included: 上病, 我是病了, 我不健康, 我身体不好. |
| I am interested in pets. | Students found this very challenging; the majority struggled with 对…感兴趣. A common attempt was: 我觉得宠物很有意思. |
| After graduating from university, | Word order "以后" and the vocabulary item "毕业" proved difficult for many students. |
| I would like to work | This was very well translated. |
| in an animal hospital. | Answers were mixed. Errors were caused by lack of knowledge of the vocabulary item 动物医院. |

**Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structures**

Minor inaccuracies, for example in character writing, will not on their own prevent the award of a tick for the key message, providing they do not lead to ambiguity.  However, an accumulation of such errors has an overall effect on accuracy, which could be reflected in the mark in this category. Excessive use of pinyin also has a negative impact when awarding marks for Application of grammatical knowledge of language and structure.

**Advice to students**

- Practise writing high frequency words and phrases, especially connectives.
- Check carefully that you do not accidentally miss out any parts of the translation.
- Always include the time frame particle 了, or a future time expression where necessary.
- If you are not sure about how to write a character, write pinyin rather than leave a blank space.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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