

7. ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Result of Primary 3 English Language in TSA 2006

The Territory-wide percentage of P.3 students achieving English Language Basic Competency in TSA 2006 was 79.4%. There was a slight improvement in the percentage achieving basic competency in 2006 relative to performance levels in 2004 and 2005.

Primary 3 Assessment Design

The assessment tasks for P.3 English Language were based on the *Basic Competency (BC) Descriptors (Tryout Version) for English Language at the end of Key Stage 1 (Primary 3)* and the *CDC Syllabus for English Language (Primary 1 – 6) 1997*. The tasks covered the four language skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking, as well as learning objectives in three interrelated strands, i.e. Interpersonal (IS), Knowledge (KS) and Experience (ES).

The P.3 written assessment consisted of three sub-papers for Listening and three sub-papers for Reading and Writing, comprising a total of 93 items and 104 score points. The duration of each Listening sub-paper was approximately 15 minutes, while each Reading and Writing sub-paper was 25 minutes. The oral assessment consisted of eight sub-papers. The composition of the P.3 sub-papers is provided in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1 Composition of P.3 Sub-papers

Written Assessment				Speaking Assessment			
Basic Competency	No. of Items (Score Points)			Basic Competency	No. of Items (Score Points)		
Listening L2-L-1-P3BC (discriminating sounds)	3EL1	3EL2	3EL3	L1-S-3-P3BC (short answers)	3ES1 & 3ES2 2(8)	3ES3 & 3ES4 2(8)	3ES5 & 3ES6 2(8)
	1(1)	2(2)	4(4)		3ES7 & 3ES8 2(8)		
	17(17)	15(15)	12(12)				
Reading L2-R-5-P3BC (reading strategies)	3ERW1	3ERW2	3ERW3	L2-S-5-P3BC (formulaic expressions)	3ES1/ 3ES2 1(2)	3ES3/ 3ES4 1(2)	3ES5/ 3ES6 1(2)
	17(17)	27(27)	27(27)		3ES7/ 3ES8 1(2)		
	7(7)	0(0)	0(0)				
Writing L2-W-3-P3BC (relevant ideas)	3ERW1	3ERW2	3ERW3	L3-S-1-P3BC (Picture descriptions - pronunciation)	3ES2 1(2)	3ES4 1(2)	3ES6 1(2)
	1(5)	1(5)	1(4)				3ES8 1(2)
	1(3)	1(3)	1(3)	L3-R-3-P3BC (reading aloud)	3ES1 1(4)	3ES3 1(4)	3ES5 1(4)
							3ES7 1(4)

P.3 Listening Items

Each student was required to attempt one of the three sub-papers (about 15 minutes each), each of which consisted of two listening tasks. All listening materials were played twice. Descriptions of the listening assessment tasks are provided in the following Tables 7.2 and 7.3.

Table 7.2 P.3 Listening: Distribution of Items

Basic Competency	Descriptor	No. of Items
L2-L-1-P3BC	Discriminating between common words with a small range of vowel and consonant sounds	5
L2-L-3-P3BC	Using a small range of strategies to understand the meaning of short and simple texts on familiar topics which are delivered slowly and clearly in familiar accents	29
	TOTAL	34

Table 7.3 P.3 Listening: Item Description and Question Types

Basic Competency	Item Description	Question Type	No. of Items (Score Points)
L2-L-1-P3BC	Writer of the month	Multiple choice	10(10)
L2-L-3-P3BC	<i>3EL1 Part 1</i>		
L2-L-3-P3BC	Trouble at home <i>3EL1 Part 2</i> <i>3EL2 Part 2</i>	Multiple choice	8(8)
L2-L-1-P3BC L2-L-3-P3BC	Picnic <i>3EL2 Part 1</i> <i>3EL3 Part 1</i>	Multiple choice	9(9)
L2-L-1-P3BC L2-L-3-P3BC	Making pancakes <i>3EL3 Part 2</i>	Multiple choice	7(7)

P.3 Reading Items

Each student was required to attempt three reading tasks in one of the three Reading and Writing sub-papers (25 minutes each). About 15 minutes were allotted for the reading tasks in each sub-paper. Descriptions of the reading tasks are provided in Tables 7.4 and 7.5.

Table 7.4 P.3 Reading: Distribution of Items

Basic Competency	Descriptor	No. of Items
L2-R-5-P3BC	Using a small range of reading strategies to understand the meaning of short and simple texts with the help of cues	48
L2-R-6-P3BC	Applying a small range of simple reference skills	7
	TOTAL	55

Table 7.5 P.3 Reading: Item Description and Question Types

Basic Competency	Item Description	Question Type	No. of Items (Score Points)
L2-R-6-P3BC	Book cover <i>3ERWI Part 1A</i>	Multiple Choice	4(4)
L2-R-5-P3BC L2-R-6-P3BC	Contents Page <i>3ERWI Part 1B</i>	Multiple Choice	5(5)
L2-R-5-P3BC	Timetable <i>3ERWI Part 2</i> <i>3ERW2 Part 2</i>	Multiple Choice	7(7)
L2-R-5-P3BC	Letter <i>3ERWI Part 3</i> <i>3ERW3 Part 3</i>	Multiple Choice	8(8)
L2-R-5-P3BC	Riddles <i>3ERW2 Part 1</i> <i>3ERW3 Part 1</i>	Multiple Choice	8(8)
L2-R-5-P3BC	Story about the lost purse <i>3ERW2 Part 3A – 3B</i>	Multiple Choice	12(12)
L2-R-5-P3BC	Comic about a naughty cat <i>3ERW3 Part 2</i>	Multiple Choice	11(11)

P.3 Writing Tasks

Each student was required to attempt one writing task in one of the three Reading and Writing sub-papers (25 minutes each). About 10 minutes were allotted for the writing task in each sub-paper. Descriptions of the writing tasks are provided in Tables 7.6 and 7.7.

Table 7.6 P.3 Writing: Distribution of Items

Basic Competency	Descriptor	No. of Items
L2-W-3-P3BC	Writing and/or responding to short and simple texts with relevant information and ideas with the help of cues	2
L2-W-4-P3BC	Writing short and simple texts using a small range of vocabulary, sentence patterns and cohesive devices fairly appropriately with the help of cues despite some spelling and grammatical mistakes	2
	TOTAL	4

Table 7.7 P.3 Writing: Item Description and Question Types

Basic Competency	Item Description	No. of Items (Score Points)
L2-W-3-P3BC	Story about shopping	1(5)
L2-W-4-P3BC	<i>3ERW1 Part 4</i> <i>3ERW2 Part 4</i>	1(3)
L2-W-3-P3BC	My favourite teacher	1(4)
L2-W-4-P3BC	<i>3ERW3 Part 4</i>	1(3)

P.3 Speaking Tasks

Each student was required to attempt either ‘Reading Aloud’ and ‘Expression of Personal Experiences’ or ‘Picture Descriptions’ in one of the eight sub-papers (about 5 minutes each including preparation time). All students were assessed on ‘Spontaneous Language Use’. There were two sub-papers in each of the four sessions during the two days of oral assessment. Each session had a different topic: shopping (*3ES1 & 3ES2*), hobbies (*3ES3 & 3ES4*), holiday (*3ES5 & 3ES6*) and signs (*3ES7 & 3ES8*). Descriptions of the speaking tasks are provided in Table 7.8.

Table 7.8 P.3 Speaking: Distribution of Tasks

Basic Competency	Task Description	Descriptor
L2-S-5-P3BC	Spontaneous Language Use in Given Situations <i>All sub-papers</i>	Using formulaic expressions to establish and maintain routines and relationships in school contexts with the help of cues
L2-R-3-P3BC	Reading Aloud <i>3ES1, 3ES3, 3ES5 & 3ES7</i>	Showing a basic understanding of short, simple and familiar texts by reading aloud the texts clearly and comprehensibly
L1-S-3-P3BC	Expression of Personal Experiences <i>3ES1, 3ES3, 3ES5 & 3ES7</i>	Providing short answers to short and simple questions
L3-S-1-P3BC	Picture Descriptions <i>3ES2, 3ES4, 3ES6 & 3ES8</i>	Pronouncing simple and familiar words comprehensibly
L1-S-3-P3BC		Providing short answers to short and simple questions

Performance of P.3 Students with Minimally Acceptable Levels of Basic Competence in TSA 2006

P.3 Listening

Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence were able to identify key words with given cues, to identify main ideas in short, spoken texts, to understand the basic differences in intonation, to discriminate between a small range of vowel and consonant sounds and to make simple inferences.

Key Words

- Many students at this level were able to identify key words for book titles (*3EL1 Part 1 'Writer of the month'* Q.2), months (*3EL1 Part 1 'Writer of the month'* Q.3), jobs (*3EL1 Part 1 'Writer of the month'* Q.4) and places (*3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 1 'Picnic'* Q.2) when they were read out clearly. The majority of students could also identify pictures of food such as chicken wings and potato chips when given verbal cues (*3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 1 'Picnic'* Q.3).

Main Ideas

- Most students were able to identify the main ideas in short, spoken texts. They were able to identify activities by listening to verbal cues (*3EL1 / 3EL2 Part 2 'Trouble at home'* Q.8).

Intonation

- Many students were able to distinguish the basic differences in intonation about happy and sad feelings (*3EL1 / 3EL2 Part 2 'Trouble at home'* Q.2 & Q.6). Many could also identify intonations regarding feelings about being puzzled, scared and bored (*3EL1 / 3EL2 Part 2 'Trouble at home'* Q.3, Q.4 & Q.7).

Sounds

- The majority of students were able to distinguish '20th' correctly from options like '12th', '22nd' and '30th' (*3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 1 'Picnic'* Q.1). For stressed and unstressed sounds, quite a number of students were able to distinguish the stressed sound '30' from '13' (*3EL3 Part 2 'Making pancakes'* Q.1). Students were also able to identify the initial consonant 'H' (Harry) from options like 'G' (Gary), 'K' (Kerry) and 'T' (Terry) (*3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 1 'Picnic'* Q.4).

Inference Skills

- Most students were able to make simple inferences from the spoken texts. They could infer that someone was a housewife from the spoken text ‘Her mother didn’t go to work. She stayed at home and looked after her big family.’ (*3EL1 Part 1 ‘Writer of the month’ Q.5*). The majority of the students could also infer the item to bring on picnic day – ‘a football’ when they heard the spoken text ‘I like ball games.’ (*3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 1 ‘Picnic’ Q.5*).

P.3 Reading

Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence were able to identify key words when reading a timetable or a comic. They could also identify main ideas in the riddles as well as the information on the book cover and the contents page. They were also capable of making simple inferences and interpreting reference words correctly.

Key Words

- Students were capable of identifying key words such as ‘vase’ with pictorial cues (*3ERW3 Part 2 ‘Comic about a naughty cat’ Q.4*). They could also identify key words about subjects and places like ‘G.S.’ and ‘playground’ with the help of contextual clues (*3ERW1 / 3ERW2 Part 2 ‘Timetable’ Q.1 & Q.6*).

Main Ideas

- Students could identify the main ideas of the riddles about objects and food (*3ERW2 / 3ERW3 Part 1 ‘Riddles’ Q.1 & Q.3*). They were also capable of identifying the main idea – ‘The kitten eats a fish.’ when reading the comic (*3ERW3 Part 2 ‘Comic about a naughty cat’ Q.6*). They were able to identify the main idea of a chapter – ‘What I eat’ by using the contextual clue ‘I eat a lot of bamboo every day.’ (*3ERW1 Part 1B ‘Contents page’ Q.4*).

Book Concepts

- Students performed well in identifying the book title on a book cover (*3ERW1 Part 1A ‘Book cover’ Q.1*). They were also able to locate information about the illustrator and the contents of the book (*3ERW1 Part 1A ‘Book cover’ Q.2 & Q.3*). They were also capable of identifying the page number of a topic and the number of chapters in the book (*3ERW1 Part 1B ‘Contents page’ Q.1 & Q.3*).

Inference Skills

- Students were able to make simple inferences. They could infer the gift Mary received – ‘a music box’ by using contextual clues ‘There is a beautiful ribbon on it. It can make sounds.’ (3ERW1 / 3ERW3 Part 3 ‘Letter’ Q.1). They could also infer the reason why Mum gets angry in the comic – ‘the house is very dirty’ (3ERW3 Part 2 ‘Comic about a naughty cat’ Q.6).

Reference Words

- Students were able to interpret the reference word ‘it’ correctly to mean ‘Coco’ the naughty cat (3ERW3 Part 2 ‘Comic about a naughty cat’ Q.3).

P.3 Writing

Writing involved completing one writing task of about 30 words. Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence generally understood the task requirements and were able to provide some relevant ideas/responses to the story/questions. They were able to communicate ideas quite clearly.

A story about shopping (3ERW1 /3ERW2 Part 4)

Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence were able to provide some brief ideas relevant to the story based on given pictures. Their descriptions were quite clear but lacked supporting details.

Student Exemplar 1

- This student provided some relevant but brief ideas based on the given pictures.
- The student provided an appropriate ending to the story.
- Ideas were presented quite clearly despite some grammatical and spelling mistakes.

Ben and his mother go to the shopping
centre, then John sees a car. So
he go to look- at the car.
Mom sees a dress. She go to watch
the drees.
John cannot find his mother,
so he cries ‘Where’s mum?’ Then,
a man comes, he finds John’s
mother. John is happy.

My favourite teacher (3ERW3 Part 4)

Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence were able to provide some relevant ideas/responses to the questions. Their descriptions were quite clear.

Student Exemplar 2

- This student provided relevant ideas about his/her favourite teacher.
- The description of the teacher was quite clear despite some grammatical and spelling mistakes.

My favourite teacher is 3C
miss Chan. She look beautiful and
she have a big eye.
She likes to teach us.
I think she is fun and
kind, because she always
play tricks with us.

P.3 Speaking

12 or 24 students (depending on the school size) were randomly selected from each school to participate in the oral assessment. No attempt was made to define a standard of basic competency in speaking because of the sample size. However, a summary of the overall performance levels of students is given in the 'General Comments on P.3 Student Performances' section.

Performance of the Best P.3 Students in TSA 2006

P.3 Listening

Students with good listening skills demonstrated their ability in the following areas:

Key Words

- Students were capable of identifying key words among other distractors in a spoken text. They were able to identify the ingredient to put on the pancakes – ‘butter’ from other distractors such as ‘jam’ and ‘fruit’ (*3EL3 Part 2 ‘Making pancakes’ Q.5*). Students could also identify the item to get for the picnic – ‘hot dogs’ from another distractor ‘hamburgers’ (*3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 1 ‘Picnic’ Q.3*).

Sounds

- Students were able to identify the initial consonant of ‘P’ (Pong) from options like ‘H’ (Hong), ‘T’ (Tong) and ‘W’ (Wong) (*3EL1 Part 1 ‘Writer of the month’ Q.1*).

Connection between Ideas

- Students were able to understand the procedures of making pancakes by identifying cohesive devices, such as ‘first’, ‘then’ and ‘and’ (*3EL3 Part 2 ‘Making pancakes’ Q.3*). They were also able to identify the sequence of events of how a person becomes a writer by listening to verbal cues like ‘after’ and ‘now’ (*3EL1 Part 1 ‘Writer of the month’ Q.8*).

Inference Skills

- Many students performed well and could infer the meaning of ‘The children are on the school bus.’ from the spoken text ‘Here’s my stop. I have to get off now.’ (*3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 1 ‘Picnic’ Q.6*).

P.3 Reading

Students with good reading skills were capable of the following:

Key Words

- Students could identify key words ‘feeding her kitten’ with the help of pictorial cues (*3ERW3 Part 2 ‘Comic about a naughty cat’ Q.1*). They could also identify the correct Christmas tree by using contextual clues ‘many lights on the tree’ and ‘with a big star at the top’ (*3ERW1 / 3ERW3 Part 3 ‘Letter’ Q.2*).

Main Ideas

- Students were able to identify main ideas such as the best title for the comic (3ERW3 Part 2 ‘Comic about a naughty cat’ Q.8), things that happened to Tom at the end of the story (3ERW2 Part 3B ‘Story about the lost purse’ Q.3) and the reason why the old man was angry in the story (3ERW2 Part 3B ‘Story about the lost purse’ Q.4).

Unfamiliar Words

- Students were able to identify the correct picture of the old man in the story by interpreting unfamiliar words ‘The old man...took out a long magic wand...’ (3ERW2 Part 3B ‘Story about the lost purse’ Q.2).

Inference Skills

- Students were able to interpret the meaning of some sentences where ideas were implicit in the story. They were able to tell the reason why the old man thought Ann was a good girl – ‘Ann only took her lost purse’ (3ERW2 Part 3A ‘Story about the lost purse’ Q.4). They could also infer that doing Math homework should not be included in ‘Activities’ lessons (3ERW1 / 3ERW2 Part 2 ‘Timetable’ Q.7).
- Students could also infer what Tom wanted to get in the story – ‘one thousand dollars’ by interpreting more than two ideas in the same paragraph (3ERW2 Part 3B ‘Story about the lost purse’ Q.5).
- Students could infer the time that Winnie wrote the letter with the help of contextual clue ‘I must sleep now because everyone is in bed.’ (3ERW1 / 3ERW3 Part 3 ‘Letter’ Q.5).

Reference Words

- Students could correctly interpret reference words such as ‘it’, meaning ‘the magic wand’ (3ERW2 Part 3B ‘Story about the lost purse’ Q.1) and ‘we’, meaning ‘Winnie and her Mum’ (3ERW1 / 3ERW3 Part 3 ‘Letter’ Q.6).

P.3 Writing

Students with good writing skills were able to communicate their ideas clearly and coherently.

A story about shopping (3ERW1 /3ERW2 Part 4)

Student Exemplar 3

- This student was able to provide interesting ideas to the story based on the pictures with many supporting details. An appropriate ending was also given.
- The description was very clear and coherent with few grammatical and spelling mistakes.

Ben and his mother went to the shopping centre yesterday. Ben saw a shiny red toy car and stared at it for a long, long time. Meanwhile, Ben's mother went to the Clothes Department and bought a beautiful lilac dress. Soon, Ben turned to tell his mother about the car. But... he's lost in the crowd - so is his mother!
Ben went to the water fountain, sat down and cried. Then he heard a familiar voice "Ben! I found you!" It was Ben's mother!
END OF PAPER

My favourite teacher (3ERW3 Part 4)

Student Exemplar 4

- This student provided many relevant ideas about his/her favourite teacher with supporting details or examples.
- The description of the teacher was very clear and coherent with few grammatical and spelling mistakes.

My favourite teacher is my class teacher, Mrs. Chan. She wears a long beautiful dress everyday. She wears a pair of red-coloured glasses. She likes telling jokes to us and playing games with us. I think she is a funny, firm, straight and responsible teacher because if we did bad things she will also scold us. She always give us sweets. She is always the one who makes the lessons fun.

P.3 Speaking

Students with good speaking skills were capable of the following:

- In ‘Spontaneous Language Use’, students could give appropriate responses to situations such as ‘Are you ready to start now?’ and ‘Well done!/Good!’. They responded readily and spoke audibly.
- In ‘Reading Aloud’, students were able to read a text fluently and clearly with appropriate pausing and intonation. They made very few or no mistakes in pronunciation.
- In ‘Expression of Personal Experiences’, students provided relevant answers to all the questions. They were able to respond to most of the questions naturally and readily and could provide some elaboration.
- In ‘Picture Descriptions’, students could provide clear descriptions of the pictures. They were able to speak very clearly and readily with very few mistakes in pronunciation. They could provide elaboration to some of the questions.

General Comments on P.3 Student Performances

P.3 Listening

- Students performed well in identifying key words with given verbal cues.
- Students could also understand intonation in common expressions about a person being happy, sad, bored, puzzled or even scared.
- Students were also capable of distinguishing initial consonants if the speaker spoke slowly and with a clear accent.
- Most of the students were able to make simple inferences from spoken texts. However, only the more able students could infer the meaning of some sentences from implicitly stated ideas.
- Many students had difficulty in identifying the connection between ideas, even though the ideas were clearly linked by cohesive devices.

P.3 Reading

- Students were generally capable of identifying key words with given pictorial cues. They could also identify key words in a timetable.
- Students performed well in identifying main ideas in riddles. However, many students had difficulty in identifying main ideas in longer texts (e.g. stories).
- Many students were capable of understanding book concepts. They could identify the book title, the illustrator, and information on the contents page of a book.
- Many students were weak in interpreting reference words and making inferences in longer texts such as letters and stories.

P.3 Writing

- Most students were able to write a short story based on the given pictures. In general, students were able to describe briefly what they saw in the pictures. A small number of students could write stories with interesting / imaginative ideas, some supporting details and appropriate endings.
- Quite a number of students were able to write about their favourite teachers with the help of given prompts. A small number were able to provide clear and coherent descriptions with details or examples.
- Many students had difficulty with verb forms, spelling and the use of cohesive devices.

P.3 Speaking

- The majority of students did well in ‘Spontaneous Language Use’. They were able to give appropriate responses to simple daily situations. They responded readily and spoke audibly.
- Students performed well in ‘Reading Aloud’. They were able to read a text fluently and clearly. However, there were some mistakes in pronunciation, such as ‘shopping centres’ and ‘tasting’ (3ES1), ‘super’ and ‘painting’ (3ES3), ‘Holiday’ and ‘December’ (3ES5) as well as ‘signs’ and ‘everywhere’ (3ES7).
- In ‘Expression of Personal Experiences’, students were able to provide relevant answers to questions with some prompting from oral assessors. Most of the answers were brief, but the more able students could provide elaboration to some questions.
- In ‘Picture Descriptions’, more than half the number of students were able to provide relevant answers to the questions but some needed prompting from oral assessors. Most answers given by students were brief. Some students with top scores were able to provide elaboration to some questions. For more than half the number of students, pronunciation was clear and they spoke readily with few mistakes.

Comparison of Student Performances in English Language at Primary 3 TSA 2004, 2005 and 2006

This was the third year that Primary 3 students participated in the Territory-wide System Assessment at the end of Key Stage 1. The percentage of students achieving Basic Competency is provided in Table 7.9.

Table 7.9 Percentage of Students Achieving English Language Basic Competency in 2004, 2005 & 2006

Year	% of Students Achieving English Language Basic Competency
2004	75.9
2005	78.8
2006	79.4

A comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of P.3 student performances in TSA 2004, 2005 and 2006 provides useful information on how teachers can help students improve (Table 7.10 summarises such a comparison).

Table 7.10 Comparison of Student Performances in English Language at Primary 3 TSA 2004, 2005 and 2006

Year Skill	2004	2005	2006
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students were able to identify key words with given cues. Students showed that they were able to distinguish a wide range of mid-vowels and some initial consonants. Most students understood the intonation about feelings in common expressions. Only some able students could distinguish stressed from unstressed sounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students also did well in identifying key words with given cues. Students were able to identify some initial consonants. Students with the top range of scores were also able to identify rhyming words in spoken texts with options given verbally. Students were also able to interpret the differences in intonation about feelings. About half the number of students were capable of distinguishing stressed from unstressed sounds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many students were able to identify key words with given cues. Many students were capable of distinguishing some initial consonants. Students could interpret the differences in intonation about feelings (happy, sad, puzzled, bored and scared). Quite a number of students were capable of distinguishing stressed from unstressed sounds. Most students were able to make simple inferences from spoken texts. The majority of students could not identify connections between ideas.

Year Skill	2004	2005	2006
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying key words was one of the main strengths of P.3 students. Students were able to identify main ideas in a sentence. Students were able to identify book titles with the pictures on the book covers. Some students could not locate information about the writer and illustrator of the books. Only some able students could interpret the contents page. A small number of students were able to interpret the meaning of unfamiliar words. Only able students were capable of making inferences. Only the students with good reading ability were able to interpret reference words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students were generally successful in identifying key words with given pictorial cues. Students were also capable of identifying main ideas in a sentence. Students were capable of matching the book titles with pictures on the book covers. Students performed better in locating information about the writer and illustrator of the books this year. Many students this year were capable of interpreting the contents page. They could tell the number of stories the book contained. Quite a number of students were able to predict the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contextual clues. About half the number of students were able to make simple inferences with pictorial cues. Some even could make inferences by reading the implicit meaning of key words. Interpreting reference words and identifying the connection between ideas were evident as two major areas of weaknesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students were good at identifying key words with or without pictorial cues. Students were capable of identifying main ideas in riddles, but had difficulty in longer texts (short stories). Students performed well and were able to identify information on both the book cover (book title and illustrator) and contents page of a book. Many students were able to predict the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contextual clues. Many students were able to make simple inferences with the help of contextual clues. However, only a small number of students were able to infer meaning from key words which were implicit. Some students were able to identify the connection between ideas, but were weak in interpreting reference words in longer texts (stories).

Year Skill	2004	2005	2006
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students were unable to write a story with a given picture. Only able students were creative and imaginative in their writing. Spelling mistakes were common. Students had difficulty writing complete sentences and using correct verb forms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students performed better in writing a story based on a series of given pictures. Some students demonstrated their creativity and imagination in writing. Spelling mistakes were still evident. Some spelling mistakes in both the short and long writing tasks interfered with meaning. Students continued to experience difficulty in writing complete sentences and using correct verb forms. Most students had difficulty in sequencing ideas. Many students failed to provide details in their writing tasks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students performed well in writing a story based on given pictures. The more able students were creative and imaginative in writing. Spelling mistakes were common which interfered with the communication of ideas. Most of the students had difficulty in using correct verb forms, though many could write in complete sentences. The majority of students still lacked the skills in organising their ideas. Most students continued to give brief ideas and answers to guided questions.

Year Skill	2004	2005	2006
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students responded quite well to formulaic expressions in simple situations. Students read the text aloud quite clearly though unfamiliar words caused some hesitation. In 'Expression of Personal Experiences', students could provide brief answers on a familiar topic in their conversations. Students needed prompting to help continue their responses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students responded better to formulaic expressions in simple everyday situations. Some students were able to read the given texts aloud with clarity. Despite some hesitations when they came across some unfamiliar words, the students were able to read the texts clearly. Students were better prepared to answer the questions. However, they could give only short and brief answers. When responding to questions asked in 'Picture Descriptions', students were able to use simple and familiar words. They provided brief answers to questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of students were able to respond appropriately to most situations. They responded readily and spoke audibly. About half the number of students were able to read fluently and clearly. They made very few mistakes in pronunciation. A small number of them were able to read fluently and clearly with appropriate pausing and intonation. Students continued to give brief answers to the questions in 'Expression of Personal Experiences'. Some of them were able to provide relevant answers with no or little prompting. However, only a small number of students could elaborate. More than half the number of students were able to provide relevant answers to most questions in 'Picture Descriptions'. Only a small number of students were able to elaborate.

Result of Primary 6 English Language in TSA 2006

The Territory-wide percentage of P.6 students achieving English Language Basic Competency in TSA 2006 was 71.3%. There was a slight improvement in the percentage achieving basic competency in 2006 relative to performance levels in 2005.

Primary 6 Assessment Design

The assessment tasks for P.6 English Language were based on the *Basic Competency (BC) Descriptors (Tryout Version) for English Language at the end of Key Stage 2 (Primary 6)* and the *CDC Syllabus for English Language (Primary 1 – 6) 1997*. The tasks covered the four language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking, and were designed in accordance with the learning objectives in three interrelated strands: Interpersonal (IS), Knowledge (KS) and Experience (ES).

The P.6 written assessment consisted of three sub-papers for Listening and three sub-papers for Reading and Writing, comprising a total of 136 items and 146 score points. The duration of each Listening sub-paper was approximately 30 minutes, while each Reading and Writing sub-paper was 50 minutes. The oral assessment consisted of eight sub-papers. The composition of the P.6 sub-papers is summarised in Table 7.11.

Table 7.11 Composition of P.6 Sub-papers

Written Assessment			Speaking Assessment					
Basic Competency	No. of Items (Score Points)		Basic Competency	No. of Items (Score Points)				
Listening	6EL1	6EL2	6EL3	L3-R-3-P6BC (reading aloud)	6ES1 1(4)	6ES3 1(4)	6ES5 1(4)	6ES7 1(4)
	0	0	1(1)		6ES1 & 6ES2 2(8)	6ES3 & 6ES4 2(8)	6ES5 & 6ES6 2(8)	6ES7 & 6ES8 2(8)
	24(24)	21(21)	25(25)		6ES1 & 6ES2 2(6)	6ES3 & 6ES4 2(6)	6ES5 & 6ES6 2(6)	6ES7 & 6ES8 2(6)
Reading	6ERW1	6ERW2	6ERW3	L4-S-1-P6BC (pronunciation)	6ES2 1(3)	6ES4 1(3)	6ES6 1(3)	6ES8 1(3)
	34(34)	26(26)	36(36)					
	3(3)	3(3)	0					
Writing	0	7(7)	1(1)	eye contact (not B.C.)	6ES2 1(1)	6ES4 1(1)	6ES6 1(1)	6ES8 1(1)
	6ERW1	6ERW2	6ERW3					
	1(6)	1(6)	1(4)					
L3-W-3-P6BC (relevant ideas)	1(3)	1(3)	1(3)					
L3-W-4-P6BC (language use)								

P.6 Listening Items

Each student was required to attempt three listening tasks in one of the three Listening sub-papers (about 30 minutes each). Listening materials were played once or twice, depending on the nature and difficulty of the task. Descriptions of the listening tasks are provided in the following Tables 7.12 and 7.13.

Table 7.12 P.6 Listening: Distribution of Items

Basic Competency	Descriptor	No. of Items
L3-L-1-P6BC	Discriminating between words with a range of vowel and consonant sounds	1
L4-L-2-P6BC	Understanding the use of a small range of language features in simple literary / imaginative spoken texts	2
L4-L-3-P6BC	Using a range of strategies to understand the meaning of simple texts on familiar topics which are delivered clearly in familiar accents	48
TOTAL		51

Table 7.13 P.6 Listening: Item Description and Question Types

Basic Competency	Item Description	Question Type	No. of Items (Score Points)
L4-L-3-P6BC	Cookery contest <i>6EL1 Part 1A</i> <i>6EL1 Part 1B</i>	Multiple choice Sequencing	4(4) 6(6)
L4-L-3-P6BC	Play about a rich man and a baker <i>6EL1 Part 2</i> <i>6EL2 Part 2</i>	Multiple choice Sequencing	7(7)
L4-L-3-P6BC	Radio programme about exercise <i>6EL1 Part 3</i> <i>6EL3 Part 3</i>	Multiple choice	7(7)
L4-L-3-P6BC	Conversation – If I were a teacher <i>6EL2 Part 1</i> <i>6EL3 Part 1</i>	Multiple choice	8(8)
L4-L-2-P6BC L4-L-3-P6BC	Poem about chicks <i>6EL2 Part 3A, 3B</i>	Multiple choice	8(8)
L3-L-1-P6BC L4-L-3-P6BC	Survey on food shopping <i>6EL3 Part 2A, 2B</i>	Multiple choice	11(11)

P.6 Reading Items

Each student was required to attempt four or five reading tasks in one of the three Reading and Writing sub-papers (50 minutes each). About 25 minutes were allotted for the reading tasks in each sub-paper. Descriptions of the reading tasks are provided in Tables 7.14 and 7.15.

Table 7.14 P.6 Reading: Distribution of Items

Basic Competency	Descriptor	No. of Items
L3-R-5-P6BC	Using a range of reading strategies to understand the meaning of simple texts with the help of cues	70
L3-R-6-P6BC	Applying simple reference skills with the help of cues	3
L4-R-4-P6BC	Understanding the use of a small range of language features in simple literary / imaginative texts	8
TOTAL		81

Table 7.15 P.6 Reading: Item Description and Question Types

Basic Competency	Item Description	Question Type	No. of Items (Score Points)
L3-R-5-P6BC	Contents page of a monthly magazine <i>6ERW1/6ERW2 Part 1</i>	Multiple choice	7(7)
L3-R-6-P6BC	Story about a smart turtle <i>6ERW1 Part 2</i>	Multiple choice	12(12)
L3-R-5-P6BC	Poster about a play <i>6ERW1/6ERW3 Part 3</i>	Multiple choice	8(8)
L3-R-5-P6BC	News article about an eating disorder <i>6ERW1 Part 4A</i>	Multiple choice	10(10)
L3-R-5-P6BC	Story about a rich man and a baker <i>6ERW2/6ERW3 Part 2A, 2B</i>	Multiple choice	14(14)
L3-R-5-P6BC	School notice <i>6ERW2 Part 3</i>	Multiple choice	7(7)
L3-R-5-P6BC	Riddles		
L4-R-4-P6BC	<i>6ERW2 Part 4A</i>	Short answer	4(4)
	<i>6ERW2 Part 4B</i>	Multiple choice	4(4)
L3-R-5-P6BC	Text about the MTR <i>6ERW3 Part 1</i>	Multiple choice	7(7)
L3-R-5-P6BC	Poem about a pet dog <i>6ERW3 Part 4</i>	Multiple choice	8(8)
L4-R-4-P6BC			

P.6 Writing Tasks

Each student was required to attempt one writing task of about 80 words in one of the three Reading and Writing sub-papers (50 minutes each). About 25 minutes were allotted for the writing task in each sub-paper. Descriptions of the writing tasks are provided in Tables 7.16 and 7.17.

Table 7.16 P.6 Writing: Distribution of Items

Basic Competency	Descriptor	No. of Items
L3-W-3-P6BC	Writing and / or responding to simple texts with relevant information and ideas (including personal experiences, imaginative ideas and evaluative remarks) with the help of cues	2
L3-W-4-P6BC	Writing simple texts using a small range of vocabulary, sentence patterns, cohesive devices and verb forms fairly appropriately with the help of cues despite some spelling and grammatical mistakes	2
	TOTAL	4

Table 7.17 P.6 Writing: Item Description and Question Types

Basic Competency	Item Description	No. of Items (Score Points)
L3-W-3-P6BC	Suggestions of ways of staying healthy	1(4)
L3-W-4-P6BC	<i>6ERW1 Part 4B</i>	1(3)
L3-W-3-P6BC	A story about a big mistake	1(4)
L3-W-4-P6BC	<i>6ERW2 Part 5</i>	1(3)
	<i>6ERW3 Part 5</i>	

P.6 Speaking Tasks

Each student was required to attempt either ‘Reading Aloud’ and ‘Teacher-Student Interaction’ or ‘Presentation’ in one of the eight sub-papers (about 5 minutes each including preparation time). There were two sub-papers in each of the four sessions during the two days of oral assessment. Each session had a different topic: Reading and Storytelling (*6ES1 & 6ES2*), Clubs and Activities (*6ES3 & 6ES4*), Our Neighbourhood (*6ES5 & 6ES6*) and A Clean Environment (*6ES7 & 6ES8*). Descriptions of the speaking tasks are provided in Table 7.18.

Table 7.18 P.6 Speaking: Distribution of Tasks

Basic Competency	Task Description	Descriptor
L3-R-3-P6BC	Reading Aloud <i>6ES1, 6ES3, 6ES5 & 6ES7</i>	Showing a basic understanding of simple and familiar texts by reading aloud the texts with comprehensible pronunciation and generally appropriate pace, stress, rhythm and intonation
L3-S-3-P6BC	Teacher-Student Interaction <i>6ES1, 6ES3, 6ES5 & 6ES7</i>	Providing and / or exchanging (asking and answering) simple information and ideas (including personal experiences, imaginative ideas and evaluative remarks), and attempting to provide some elaboration with the help of cues
L3-S-4-P6BC		Using a small range of vocabulary, sentence patterns and cohesive devices to convey simple information and ideas fairly appropriately with the help of cues despite some grammatical mistakes
L4-S-1-P6BC		Pronouncing familiar words comprehensibly
L3-S-3-P6BC	Presentation <i>6ES2, 6ES4, 6ES6 & 6ES8</i>	Providing and / or exchanging (asking and answering) simple information and ideas (including personal experiences, imaginative ideas and evaluative remarks), and attempting to provide some elaboration with the help of cues
L3-S-4-P6BC		Using a small range of vocabulary, sentence patterns and cohesive devices to convey simple information and ideas fairly appropriately with the help of cues despite some grammatical mistakes

Performance of P.6 Students with Minimally Acceptable Levels of Basic Competence in TSA 2006

P.6 Listening

In listening, students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence were able to sequence pictures in the correct order, to extract specific information, to identify key words with given cues and the tone of speakers. They were capable of understanding the meaning of simple spoken texts on familiar topics.

Sequence

- Most students were able to sequence pictures in the correct order in a ‘Cookery Contest’ task (*6EL1 Part 1B*).

Key Words

- Most students were able to identify key words, for example, ‘teenagers’ to refer to the age group of 13 to 19-year-old youths (*6EL1/6EL3 Part 3 ‘Teen Talk – Exercise’ Q.1*).

Specific Information

- Most students could extract specific information about an age group, jobs, places and the amount of money spent on food (*6EL3 Part 2 ‘Food Shopping’ Q.3 – 5 & 7*).
- Most students could extract specific information from given pictorial cues as options, for example, where the rich man and the baker were (*6EL1/6EL2 Part 2 ‘The Rich Man and the Baker’ Q.1*).
- In the radio programme ‘Teen Talk’ (*6EL1/6EL3 Part 3*), most students were able to interpret what the programme was about when listening to its introduction (*Q.2*) and in the conversation ‘*If I were a teacher*’ (*6EL2/6EL3 Part 1*). They were also capable of extracting specific information, for example, what Paul would do if he were a teacher (*Q.6*) and if he did not go to school (*Q.7*).
- In the poem ‘*Chicks*’ (*6EL2 Part 3B*), most students were able to understand specific information as to what the farmer was doing (*Q.2*).

Tone

- Most students were able to identify the surprised tone of the speaker in ‘*Food Shopping*’ (*6EL3 Part 2B Q.4*), when Paul gave the woman a gift.

P.6 Reading

Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence were capable of extracting specific information from a short introduction to a play and a story. They were also able to identify different text-types, such as newspapers and narratives. They could understand the meaning of unfamiliar expressions by using contextual cues as well as information that was not explicitly stated in a story.

Text-types

- Students could identify different text-types, such as a narrative (*6ERW2/6ERW3 Part 2A 'The Rich Man and the Baker'* *Q.1*) and a newspaper article (*6ERW1 Part 4 'Eating Disorder'* *Q.1*).

Specific Information

- Students were able to identify specific information with given pictorial cues as options. For example, when reading a story about the places where the rich people and the baker lived (*6ERW2/6ERW3 Part 2A 'The Rich Man and the Baker'* *Q.2*).
- Students were also capable of interpreting information from a contents page in a magazine '*Women's Monthly*' (*6ERW1/6ERW2 Part 1*) with a situation of how to make one's home more beautiful (*Q.6*).
- Students were able to extract specific information when reading a poster for a play (*6ERW1/6ERW3 Part 3*). For example, the year when the author was born and what a student has to bring if he/she wants to buy a ticket to the play *Q.2 and Q.7*.

Reference Words

- Students were able to interpret reference words when reading a school notice (*6ERW2 Part 3*), such as the pronoun 'you' referring to all students (*Q.1*).

Unfamiliar Words

- Students were able to interpret the meaning of unfamiliar words and expressions such as 'The baker's face grew red' and 'He jumped around like a mad monkey', meaning he was 'angry' (*6ERW2/6ERW3 Part 2B 'The Rich Man and the Baker'* *Q.4*).

Inference Skills

- Students were able to infer information not explicitly stated in a school notice, for example, Paul needed to buy a new school uniform because it was too small (*6ERW2 Part 3*) – students should wear a proper school uniform (*Q.2*). Also, they were able to infer that the turtle was clever when it tricked the hunters to set itself free (*6ERW1 Part 2 'Small Turtle'* *Q.11*).

P.6 Writing

The writing assessment at this level required the completion of one writing task of about 80 words. Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence generally understood the task requirements and completed at least half of the required word length with relevant content and ideas. Students could write with a fairly appropriate range of vocabulary, sentence patterns, cohesive devices and verb forms, though some grammatical and spelling mistakes were apparent.

Staying Healthy (6ERW1 Part 4B)

In a writing task, when asked to suggest ways of staying healthy, students at the minimally acceptable level of basic competence were able to provide relevant ideas with few or no supporting details or very limited ideas with some elaboration. Though grammatical and spelling mistakes were apparent, they could still communicate their ideas quite clearly (*Student Exemplar 1*).

Student Exemplar 1

Staying Healthy

It is more important to keep ourselves healthy than to just look good. If we can healthy, we'll get many friends. We get healthy is easy, if we go to run in morning, drink light cups water, don't eat too much fried food, we can get healthy. Many people always say "to stay healthy, is easy" But they is a not healthy too. So, if we can do exercise, & drink too much water, don't eat more fried food. we can do a healthy work.

A Big Mistake (6ERW2 Part 5 / 6ERW3 Part 5)

Based on a sequence of picture prompts showing a student getting on the wrong bus, students at the minimally acceptable level of basic competence were able to either write a factual account with some elaboration or provide a few brief ideas. In many cases, an ending was provided. The description of the story was quite clear and coherent despite spelling and grammatical mistakes (*Student Exemplar 2*).

Student Exemplar 2

A Big Mistake

In the past morning, paul went to school. He had breakfast, he standed to the bus stop. ^{was} He reading books when he wait the bus. The bus came, then he got on the bus.

He went the bus. The women is sleeping. He got off the bus, he found himself to get on the wrong bus. He got on the correct bus.

He went school ^{too} late. The teacher said, 'Why do you too late?' He said, 'Because I got on wrong bus.' He sit on the chair happily.

He went to home, Miss Wong him.

The story adive people must care the bus to where.

P.6 Speaking

12 or 24 students (depending on the school size) were randomly selected from each school to participate in the oral assessment. No attempt was made to define a standard of basic competency in speaking because of the sample size. However, a summary of the overall performance levels of students is given in the 'General Comments on P.6 Student Performances' section.

Performance of the Best P.6 Students in TSA 2006

P.6 Listening

Students with the best performance demonstrated their ability in the following areas:

Personification

- Students were able to interpret the representation of the hen in the poem '*Chicks*' (*6EL2 Part 3B*) as a person when the hen by the tree shouts to her children (*Q.3*).

Specific Information

- Students were able to understand why Sammy was surprised when he found out that a teenager took the bus to go one stop (*6EL1/6EL3 Part 3 'Teen Talk – Exercise'* *Q.3*).

Inference Skills

- Students demonstrated good inference skills in interpreting the reason why Paul said that going to school did not help him (*6EL2/6EL3 Part 1 'If I were a teacher'* *Q.2*).

Main Ideas

- Students were competent in interpreting the main ideas of spoken texts. For example, they understood the reason why the judge asked the baker to count the rich man's coins every morning in '*The Rich Man and the Baker*' (*6EL1/6EL2 Part 2 Q.6*), and what John suggested doing at examination time in a radio programme (*6EL1/6EL3 Part 3 'Teen Talk – Exercise'* *Q.6*). In another example, students understood what Anna was trying to do to Paul when listening to their conversation (*6EL2/6EL3 Part 1 'If I were a teacher'* *Q.8*).

Predicting Development

- Students were able to predict the development of spoken texts, for example, at the end of a story where the judge set both the baker and the rich man free saying, "It's fair now." (*6EL1/6EL2 Part 2 'The Rich Man and the Baker'* *Q.7*). In another example, the little chicks were told where to dig for worms in the last two lines of the poem, 'A good place for you to dig /And get all the worms that are big' (*6EL2 Part 3B 'Chicks'* *Q.4*).

P.6 Reading

Students with the best performance demonstrated their ability in the following aspects:

Unfamiliar Words

- Students were able to interpret the meaning of unfamiliar words and expressions in short reading passages, for example, ‘a folk tale’ (6ERW1 Part 2 ‘Small Turtle’ Q.2), ‘starvation’ (6ERW1 Part 4A ‘Eating Disorder’ Q.7) and ‘vehicle’ (6ERW3 Part 1 ‘The MTR’ Q.6).

Main Ideas

- Some able students could use supporting details to deduce main ideas. For example, paragraph 3, in a passage titled ‘The MTR’, describes what passengers do on the trains. Students could understand the main idea that many things happen on the trains (6ERW3 Part 1 Q.5). Also, lines 7 – 12 in a poem telling what Ted liked doing, students understood that he liked to play outside (6ERW3 Part 4 ‘The Pet’ Q.4).
- Students were able to grasp the main idea of different text-types. For example, an article about a serious eating disorder, starvation (6ERW1 Part 4A ‘Eating Disorder’ Q.10), and a stanza in a poem about the best times Ted had with his pet dog (6ERW3 Part 4 ‘The Pet’ Q.5).

Inference Skills

- Students could interpret the meaning of some information where the meaning was implicit in a short story, for example, the reason why turtles live in the water most of their time so the hunters in the story would not be able to catch them (6ERW1 Part 2 ‘Small Turtle’ Q.10).
- Students could extract specific information from a newspaper article (ERW1 Part 4A ‘Eating Disorder’), for example, the doctor’s comment about a teenage girl (Q.6) and some facts about Pamela who suffered from an eating disorder (Q.9).

Personification

- Students were able to interpret and analyse how personified objects describe themselves, such as a wheel which moves the bus, ‘Without me, the bus can’t move’ and a stamp, ‘People have to buy me and they stick me on envelopes’ (6ERW2 Part 4B ‘Riddles’ Q.1 & Q.3).

Rhyme

- Students could identify pairs of rhymes in a poem, e.g. 'bone' and 'alone'. (6ERW3 Part 4 'The Pet' Q.8).

P.6 Writing

Students with good writing skills could write simple description and narrations of paragraph length and provide many relevant ideas with supporting details. They could communicate their ideas effectively, clearly and coherently. They demonstrated good language skills by using a range of vocabulary, varied sentence patterns and cohesive devices. Students could also write making few or no grammatical and spelling mistakes.

Staying Healthy (6ERW1 Part 4B)

Students were able to provide many relevant ideas with supporting details about ways of staying healthy. The ideas provided were well organised into clear and coherent paragraphs, often with a good introduction and conclusion (*Student Exemplar 3*).

Student Exemplar 3

Staying Healthy

It is more important to keep ourselves healthy than to just look good. We can eat (more) vegetables and fruit than meat. It can make ourselves healthy. Don't eat very little because if you eat very little, you'll get sick. We can do more exercise to keep ourselves healthy. Enough exercise can help us keep fit. We should drink enough water everyday. It can help us healthy. If you eat too much fried food, you'll get fatter, so we shouldn't eat too much. We eat enough in the morning, in the afternoon and at night, we will be a healthy person!

A Big Mistake (6ERW2 Part 5 / 6ERW3 Part 5)

Students constructed an interesting and imaginative story based on the picture prompts given and provided an appropriate ending. Story descriptions were coherent with supporting details and well organised (*Student Exemplar 4*).

Student Exemplar 4

A Big Mistake

Paul was on his way to school and he was reading a book. He queued up like everyone else. He didn't notice he was in the wrong queue. Then the bus arrived and he still didn't know he was getting on the wrong bus. The bus was going to Yim Sha Tsui. He sat next to a woman who was sleeping. Paul was still reading his fascinating book and he couldn't stop reading it.

The bus finally came to Yim Sha Tsui. Paul got off. He saw that it was not his school. He said to himself that he had got on the wrong bus. He ran to catch a taxi but didn't have enough money to pay for it. So he went to take a MTR because he knew it was fast and he wouldn't be too late.

Paul got to school a bit late and his class teacher didn't tell him off but he was angry with the book and wanted to throw it away.

P.6 Speaking

Students with good speaking skills were competent in the following areas:

- In ‘Reading Aloud’, students read the texts aloud fluently and clearly with appropriate pausing and intonation. They made very few or no pronunciation mistakes.
- In ‘Teacher-Student Interaction’, students provided relevant answers to most of the questions and were often able to elaborate by providing examples or further details. They responded naturally and readily to different topics, using a small range of vocabulary, varied sentence patterns and cohesive devices with few grammatical mistakes.
- In ‘Presentation’, students were able to provide a range of ideas relevant to the topic and with some elaboration. They spoke clearly and organised ideas with few mistakes in pronunciation. They used a range of vocabulary, varied sentence patterns and cohesive devices with few grammatical mistakes. Appropriate eye contact with the oral assessors was maintained throughout the presentation.

General Comments on P.6 Student Performances

P.6 Listening

- Students performed well when given pictorial cues and could sequence pictures in a correct order.
- Students also performed well with questions that used few written prompts. They were competent in extracting factual information by completing a survey with given options.
- Students were generally successful in identifying key words. However, a considerable number had difficulty in identifying the main ideas of spoken texts.
- More than half the students were weak in interpreting the representation of a personified object and in predicting the development of spoken texts.
- As in the previous year, students found inferencing a difficult skill at this key stage.

P.6 Reading

- Students were generally capable of locating specific information from a text, for example, notices and posters, or identifying specific information with given pictorial cues. Their skills, however, did not extend to interpreting unfamiliar words or expressions in context or extracting specific information from reading longer passages.
- Many students could infer information in reading passages, but almost half the students did not perform well in identifying a main idea in a paragraph.
- Many students could identify rhyming words in a poem while almost half the students had difficulty interpreting personification.
- Students at Key Stage 2 would benefit from more exposure to a variety of reading materials to include riddles, poems and extended prose.

P.6 Writing

- In general, students performed better with a narrative '*A Big Mistake*' rather than an expository piece of writing '*Staying Healthy*'.
- When writing tasks were provided with prompts and set in a simple and familiar context, students were able to provide interesting ideas with relevant details. For

example, when writing a story, students were able to describe a picture with details and could also provide a proper ending.

- However, without prompts, students had difficulty developing and organising their ideas in paragraphs. For example, when instructed to provide ways to stay healthy, most students were only able to list a few ideas with few details. In addition, students who lacked sufficient vocabulary could not express their ideas clearly or adequately.
- Many students could write using verb forms in simple sentences although there were spelling mistakes.

P.6 Speaking

- In the oral assessments, students presented their ideas well using a small range of vocabulary and basic sentence patterns although some grammatical mistakes were apparent.
- On average, students were able to read all or most of the text aloud quite clearly and audibly. Words that some students had difficulty pronouncing included ‘problems’ & ‘project’ (6ES1), ‘activities’ & ‘snacks’ (6ES3), ‘neighbourhood’ & ‘court’ (6ES5), ‘mask’ & ‘tissue’ (6ES7).
- During the ‘Teacher-Student Interaction’, most students were able to provide relevant responses to most of the oral assessor’s questions. Some could even provide further details on familiar topics, such as clubs and activities.
- In a two-minute ‘Presentation’, many students were able to provide relevant information and ideas based on the picture prompts when delivering a speech or telling a story. They were able to communicate their ideas quite clearly despite some mistakes in pronunciation.
- In storytelling (6ES2), some students had difficulty completing it well as it was a new required task. Some were unable to maintain eye contact with oral assessors as they looked down at the pictures when speaking. Sub-papers 6ES6 and 6ES8 were also considered quite challenging for some students. Some were not familiar with the context of ‘A Neighbourhood Fun Day’ (6ES6) and had difficulty elaborating on the pictures presented to them. ‘Pollution’ (6ES8) was a topic familiar to some students but many had difficulty presenting ideas on the subject.

Comparison of Student Performances in English Language at Primary 6 TSA 2005 and 2006

This was the second year that Primary 6 students participated in the Territory-wide System Assessment at the end of Key Stage 2. The percentage of students achieving Basic Competency is provided in Table 7.19.

Table 7.19 Percentage of Students Achieving English Language Basic Competency in 2005 and 2006

Year	% of Students Achieving English Language Basic Competency
2005	70.5
2006	71.3

A comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of P.6 student performances in TSA 2005 and 2006 provides useful information on how teachers can help students improve. Table 7.20 summarises such a comparison.

**Table 7.20 Comparison of Student Performances in English Language at Primary 6
TSA 2005 and 2006**

Year Skill \	2005	2006
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main strength of P.6 students was locating specific information from charts, tables, notices and posters. Only able students were capable of interpreting the meaning of some sentences where ideas were not stated explicitly. Most students found interpreting unfamiliar words, personification and simile very difficult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main strength of P.6 students was locating specific information from a text, e.g. notices and posters, and identifying specific information when pictorial cues were given. Many students were capable of inferring information in short texts which the writer had not stated clearly. Almost half of the students found interpreting unfamiliar words in context and personification difficult. Almost half of the students could not identify main ideas and use supporting details to deduce main ideas in longer texts.
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students performed slightly better in a reply to a letter as they were able to partially substitute words and ideas from a given letter to form the reply. Most students were able to provide the correct sender and recipient of a letter as well as a beginning and/or closing. The most able students were capable of providing many ideas clearly and coherently with supporting details. They made few or no grammatical mistakes. Many students could only use a small range of vocabulary, sentence patterns, cohesive devices and verb forms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students performed better in completing a narrative than an expository piece of writing. Where tasks provided prompts in simple and familiar contexts, many students were able to provide interesting, relevant ideas with details. Many students could not organise ideas in paragraphs and lacked sufficient vocabulary to express their ideas clearly. Many students could write using verb forms in simple sentences with spelling mistakes.

Year Skill \	2005	2006
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most P.6 students were able to identify key words including numbers, days of the week and quantity. • Using picture prompts, most students were able to sequence instructions/steps in the correct order. • Students were able to extract specific information about an age group, price and a place to buy the product. • The best students showed good ability in identifying rhyming words in spoken texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P.6 students were generally successful in identifying key words. • Most students had no difficulty in sequencing the pictures in the correct order. • Students performed better in extracting specific information from surveys. • Capable students showed good ability in identifying rhyming words in spoken texts and good inference skills in interpreting a reason for an action in a story.
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students were capable of reading the given texts aloud quite clearly but some mistakes in pronunciation were evident. • Students generally were able to provide relevant answers related to a given topic when interacting with the oral assessors. • In a two-minute 'Presentation', students were able to provide relevant ideas to the topic with appropriate eye contact. • Students with top scores were able to give elaboration when interacting with oral assessors or doing the 'Presentation'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students were able to read all or most of the texts quite clearly and audibly though some words were mispronounced. • Most students were able to provide relevant responses to some of the questions raised by the oral assessors. Some could even provide further details on the topics familiar to them. • In 'Presentation', many students were able to provide relevant information and ideas based on the pictures given and communicate their ideas quite clearly despite some mistakes in pronunciation. • Some able students could elaborate their ideas when interacting with oral assessors. However, most students had difficulty elaborating their ideas if they were unfamiliar with the topics.

Result of Secondary 3 English Language in TSA 2006

The Territory-wide percentage of S.3 students achieving English Language Basic Competency in TSA 2006 was 68.6%.

Secondary 3 Assessment Design

The assessment tasks for S.3 English Language were based on the *Basic Competency (BC) Descriptors (Tryout Version) for English Language at the end of Key Stage 3 (Secondary 3)* and the *CDC Syllabus for English Language (Secondary 1 – 3) 1999*. The tasks covered the four language skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking, and were designed in accordance with the learning objectives in three interrelated strands: Interpersonal (IS), Knowledge (KS) and Experience (ES).

The S.3 written assessment consisted of three sub-papers for Listening, Reading and Writing, comprising a total of 128 items and 137 score points. The duration of each Listening sub-paper was approximately 20 minutes, while each Reading sub-paper was 30 minutes and each Writing sub-paper was 40 minutes. The oral assessment had two components, which was comprised of eight sub-papers in total. The composition of the S.3 sub-papers is summarised in Table 7.21.

Table 7.21 Composition of S.3 Sub-papers

Written Assessment				Speaking Assessment	
Basic Competency	No. of Items (Score Points)			Basic Competency	No. of Items (Score Points)
Listening	9EL1	9EL2	9EL3	L5-S-3-S3BC (ideas)	9ESP1 – 9ESP8 Individual Presentation
	3(3)	1(1)	0		8(4)
	14(14)	14(14)	15(15)		8(4)
	7(7)	7(7)	7(7)		0
Reading	9ER1	9ER2	9ER3	L6-S-6-S3BC (organisation)	8(4)
	28(28)*	34(34)*	25(25)*		0
	0	9(9)*	6(6)*		0
	6(6)*	0	0	L5-S-4-S3BC (vocabulary & language patterns)	8(4)
	1(1)	0	7(7)*		0
Writing	9EW1	9EW2	9EW3	L5-S-2-S3BC (pronunciation & delivery)	8(4)
	1(4)	1(4)	1(4)		0
	1(4)	1(4)	1(4)	L6-S-5-S3BC (strategies for oral communication)	8(2)
	1(2)	1(2)	1(2)		8(2)
	1(2)	1(2)	1(2)		

* Items are assessed on more than one BC descriptor.

S.3 Listening Items

Each student attempted three listening tasks in one of the three Listening sub-papers (about 20 minutes each). Listening materials were played once or twice, depending on the nature and difficulty of the task. Descriptions of the listening tasks are provided in the following Tables 7.22 and 7.23.

Table 7.22 S.3 Listening: Distribution of Items

Basic Competency	Descriptor	No. of Items
L5-L-1-S3BC	Understanding the use of a range of language features in simple literary / imaginative spoken texts	3
L5-L-2-S3BC	Using an increasing range of strategies to understand the meaning of simple texts on familiar and less familiar topics which are delivered clearly and in generally familiar accents	34
L6-R-1-S3BC	Using an increasing range of reading strategies to understand the meaning of texts with some degree of complexity	7
TOTAL		44

Table 7.23 S.3 Listening: Item Description and Question Types

Basic Competency	Item Description	Question Type	No. of Items (Score Points)
L5-L-1-S3BC	Poem about Autumn	Multiple choice	7(7)
L5-L-2-S3BC	<i>9EL1 Part 1</i>	Short answer	
L5-L-1-S3BC	Radio programme – Cheung Chau	Multiple choice	8(8)
L5-L-2-S3BC	<i>9EL1 Part 2A</i>		
L5-L-2-S3BC	Integrated task – Bun Festival	Gap filling	5(5)
L6-R-1-S3BC	<i>9EL1 Part 2B</i>		7(7)
	<i>9EL2 Part 2</i>		
	<i>9EL3 Part 2</i>		
L5-L-2-S3BC	Radio programme – Public housing	Multiple choice	10(10)
	<i>9EL2 Part 1</i>		
L5-L-2-S3BC	Story about two girls	Multiple choice	10(10)
	<i>9EL3 Part 1</i>	Sequencing	

S.3 Reading Items

Each student was required to attempt three reading tasks in one of the three Reading sub-papers. Thirty minutes were allotted for the reading tasks in each sub-paper. Descriptions of the reading tasks are provided in Tables 7.24 and 7.25.

Table 7.24 S.3 Reading: Distribution of Items

Basic Competency	Descriptor	No. of Items
L6-R-1-S3BC	Using an increasing range of reading strategies to understand the meaning of texts with some degree of complexity	87*
L6-R-2-S3BC	Extracting and organizing information and ideas from texts with some degree of complexity	15*
L5-R-3-S3BC	Understanding the use of a range of language features and other techniques to present themes, characters, experiences and feelings in simple literary / imaginative texts	6*
L5-R-4-S3BC	Applying a range of reference skills for various purposes with the help of cues	8*
	TOTAL	116*

* Items are assessed on more than one BC descriptor.

Table 7.25 S.3 Reading: Item Description and Question Types

Basic Competency	Item Description	Question Type	No. of Items (Score Points)
L6-R-1-S3BC	Poem – My Life	Multiple choice	9(9)
L5-R-3-S3BC	<i>9ER1 Part 1</i>	Short answer	
L6-R-1-S3BC	Magazine article about the Hong Kong Arts Festival	Multiple choice	8(8)
L5-R-4-S3BC	<i>9ER1 Part 2</i>		
L6-R-1-S3BC	Book reviews	Multiple choice	
	<i>9ER1 Part 3</i>	Short answer	16(16)
	<i>9ER2 Part 3</i>	Sequencing	15(15)
L6-R-1-S3BC	School activities	Short answer	9(9)
L6-R-2-S3BC	<i>9ER2 Part 1</i>		
L5-R-4-S3BC	Programme for a visit		9(9)
	<i>9ER3 Part 1</i>		
L6-R-1-S3BC	Article about the writer of <i>Treasure Island</i>	Multiple choice	8(8)
L5-R-4-S3BC	<i>9ER3 Part 2</i>		
L6-R-1-S3BC	Magazine article about basketball	Multiple options	
	<i>9ER2 Part 2</i>	Short answer	10(10)
	<i>9ER3 Part 3</i>		15(15)

S.3 Writing Tasks

Each student was required to attempt one writing task of about 150 words in one of the three Writing sub-papers. Forty minutes were allotted for the writing task in each sub-paper. Descriptions of the writing tasks are provided in Tables 7.26 and 7.27.

Table 7.26 S.3 Writing: Distribution of Items

Basic Competency	Descriptor	No. of Items
L6-W-1-S3BC	Writing a variety of texts for different purposes with relevant and generally adequate content	3
L6-W-2-S3BC	Writing a variety of texts using punctuation marks and a range of vocabulary and language patterns with some degree of appropriacy and accuracy to convey meaning	
L6-W-3-S3BC	Writing a variety of texts with adequate overall planning and organization (including the use of cohesive devices and paragraphs, and sequencing of ideas)	
L5-W-5-S3BC	Writing a variety of texts using the salient features of a range of genres generally appropriately with the help of cues	
	TOTAL	3

Table 7.27 S.3 Writing: Item Description and Question Types

Basic Competency	Item Description	No. of Items (Score Points)
L6-W-1-S3BC	An article describing a Christmas party <i>9EW1</i>	1(12)
L6-W-2-S3BC		
L6-W-3-S3BC	A letter about English Week <i>9EW2</i>	1(12)
L5-W-5-S3BC	A letter giving advice to a friend's brother <i>9EW3</i>	1(12)

S.3 Speaking Tasks

Each student was required to attempt either an ‘Individual Presentation’ (3 minutes for preparation and 2 minutes for assessment) or a ‘Group Interaction’ (3 minutes for preparation and 3 minutes for assessment). There were altogether 16 sub-papers: two sub-papers for each component in each of the four sessions during the two assessment days. Descriptions of the speaking tasks are provided in Table 7.28.

Table 7.28 S.3 Speaking: Distribution of Tasks

Basic Competency	Task Description	Descriptor
L5-S-2-S3BC	Individual Presentation <i>9ESP1 – 9ESP8</i>	Using a range of delivery techniques (including stress, rhythm and intonation) to convey meaning generally appropriately with the help of cues
L5-S-3-S3BC		Expressing information and ideas (including personal experiences, feelings, opinions, imaginative ideas and evaluative remarks) with some elaboration
L5-S-4-S3BC		Using a range of vocabulary and language patterns with some degree of appropriacy and accuracy to convey meaning
L6-S-5S3BC		Using formulaic expressions and a range of strategies for oral communication to establish and maintain relationships/interaction in familiar situations
L6-S-6-S3BC		Using organizing techniques generally appropriately to convey meaning
L5-S-3-S3BC	Group Interaction <i>9ESG1 – 9ESG8</i>	Expressing information and ideas (including personal experiences, feelings, opinions, imaginative ideas and evaluative remarks) with some elaboration
L6-S-5S3BC		Using formulaic expressions and a range of strategies for oral communication to establish and maintain relationships/interaction in familiar situations

Performance of S.3 Students with Minimally Acceptable Levels of Basic Competence in TSA 2006

S.3 Listening

Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence were able to extract specific information, to arrange story events in the correct order, to find main ideas in spoken texts and to integrate simple information from a tapescript to a given written description.

Specific Information

- Most students were capable of extracting specific information from spoken texts, for example, where Mary thought she had last seen her notes – the basketball court (*9EL3 Part 1 'Story about two girls' Q.3*).

Sequence

- Most students were able to sequence a story in the correct order (*9EL3 Part 1 'Story about two girls' Q.10*), demonstrating skills in understanding the meaning of spoken texts in a chronological order.

Inference Skills

- Students were capable of generating information that was not explicitly stated in the story. For example, they could infer that ‘Mary knew she had made a big mistake’ when ‘she found her own notes in the locker’, as well as the reason for queuing for water was that ‘the hut had no running water’ (*9EL3 Part 1 'Story about two girls' Q.7 & 9EL2 Part 1 'Radio programme – Public housing' Q.8 respectively*).

Integrated Skills

- Students were capable of intergrating simple information while listening to a given written description. For example, they could understand from the tapescript that the Bun Festival first started 100 years ago as well as extract specific information from the written text, such as the year when the ‘bun-scrambling competition’ was banned and when it started again (*9EL1 Part 1 Section B// 9EL2/9EL3 Part 2 'Radio programme – Cheung Chau' Q.3 and Q.9 respectively*).

S.3 Reading

Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence were able to extract specific information from reading texts as well as locate information from different text-types such as charts and tables. They were capable of identifying supporting details in various reading passages. Students could also understand information that was not explicitly stated in texts with familiar topics.

Specific Information

- Students could extract specific information from two book reviews, such as identifying the writer (*9ER1 Part 3 'Book reviews'* (29) & (38)).
- Students were able to locate specific information such as timeslots for each activity (*9ER3 Part 1 'Programme for a visit'* (12) & (13)) from an activity schedule and preferred activities from a bar chart (*9ER3 Part 1 (16)-(18)*).

Details Supporting Main Ideas

- Students were able to locate supporting details of the main idea about activities shown at the Hong Kong Arts Festival from the text – ‘It features music, theatre, dance, popular entertainment, film and exhibition programmes’ (*9ER1 Part 2 Q.2*).

Inference Skills

- Students could decipher information in a poem, such as ‘line up in the same hall’ and ‘sit properly in the same chair’, to understand that the setting of the poem is a school (*9ER1 Part 1 'My Life' Q.1*). They could also infer the writer’s view which was not explicitly stated – for ‘a life with more free time’ from stanza 2 of the poem (*9ER1 Part 1 Q.2*).

S.3 Writing

Writing assessments involved completing a writing task of about 150 words in 40 minutes. The writing of students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence generally showed the following characteristics:

- some relevant content with some details to support ideas
- paragraphs generally developed based on prompts
- the use of simple connectives and sequencers (and, but, first, then, etc.)
- the use of familiar vocabulary and simple language patterns
- some errors in grammar and spelling that do not affect meaning
- some required basic features in various tasks

An article describing a Christmas party (9EW1)

Student Exemplar 1

Last week, I had joined at my class Christmas party. I was very happy.

In the party, there are a lot of foods. It is because everybody bring different tips of foods to school. For example, chickenwings and fishballs.

We also ^{point} a christmas tree on the blackboard, because we don't have enough money to buy a christmas tree. We have exchange christmas gift, we were excised to know what it is.

Of cause, we have sing some christmas songs. For example, Jingle Bells.

Suddenly, Santor has come and gave a present to me. I was so excited and I open the present, then I see my favorite car, I want to buy this toy long long time ago, but I don't have enough money to buy. I was so surprised and I think I was so lucky that day.

Last, I took some photo with my classmates and began to eat the christmas food. The foods were so delicious. I was so happy at that day.

A letter about English Week (9EW2)

Student Exemplar 2

Dear Peter

How do you do? How are your parents? It is the English Week at my school this week. It is held by the English club.

There are lots of activities this week. There was a game competition in English corner yesterday. I took part in it.

Although I did not win the game, I enjoyed it very much. There was a film show this afternoon. The film is about a girl and a boy their love story, it was so touching. The next exciting activity will be held tomorrow. It is singing contest. Tom, my classmate, can sing very well. I am surely that he will win in the contest. There are also a book sale in the hall tomorrow. The Storytelling competition is on the Thursday and there are a lucky draw on Friday. The biggest present is a teddy bear, I love it very much. I hope i will be a lucky one on Friday.

I have to stop here since I still got lots work to do.

Yours sincerely,

Chris

Student Exemplar 3

29 June, 06

Dear Paul,

I am your sister best friend, ~~so~~ she had told about you. A ~~thing~~ you should not smoking, ~~as~~ smoking will make you die. If you talk to friends on the phone for four hours almost every night, is it your girl friend? But you can't use phone too long, ~~because~~ because you have back to school. Are you want many money? Why you are ~~reaching~~ money from your Mum's ~~or~~ purse. If you want ~~a~~ money, you can say with your mother or father, but you should not steal money. Your marks are getting bad, can I help you? I can help your ~~getting~~ marks are getting good, but you can't smoking, some home after midnight, talk to friends on the phone for four hours ~~so~~. I want you can listen you sister, she was very worry you.

If you have any want to tell to me, you can give me a letter.

Good lucky

Dawn

S.3 Speaking

12 or 24 students (depending on the school size) were randomly selected from each school to participate in the oral assessment. No attempt was made to define a standard of basic competency in speaking because of the sample size. However, a summary of the overall performance levels of students is given in the ‘General Comments on S.3 Student Performances’ section.

Performance of the Best S.3 Students in TSA 2006

S.3 Listening

Students with the best performance demonstrated their ability in the following areas:

Unfamiliar Words

- Students were able to deduce the meaning of unfamiliar words, such as ‘breathtaking’ meaning ‘fascinating’ or ‘thrilling’ (*9EL1 Part 2 Section A ‘Radio programme – Cheung Chau’ Q.5*) and ‘twinkling sky’ referring to ‘stars’ in the sky (*9EL1 Part 1 ‘Poem about Autumn’ Q.4*).

Inference Skills

- Students demonstrated good inference skills in telling that it was night time from the line ‘The moon glows silently’ (*9EL1 Part 1 ‘Poem about Autumn’ Q.2*) and could identify that the government’s public housing programme could have been better when hearing ‘people still had to live on hillsides where life was difficult’ (*9EL2 Part 1 ‘Radio programme – Public housing’ Q.6*).

Main Ideas

- Students were able to grasp the main ideas from spoken texts when listening to a radio programme. For example, they understood that thanks to the government housing programme, the Au family’s children ‘were successful’ (*9EL2 Part 1 ‘Radio programme – Public housing’ Q. 9*).

Details Supporting Main Ideas

- Students were capable of identifying details to support the main idea in a radio programme such as the Au family living ‘in poor conditions’ since they ‘had no running water, no toilet...’ (*9EL2 Part 1 ‘Radio programme – Public housing’ Q.4*). Another example, people can enjoy lovely views on Cheung Chau since it is ‘a rural area with beautiful scenery’ and ‘the views from the mountain top are breathtaking’ (*9EL1 Part 2 Section A ‘Radio programme – Cheung Chau’ Q.3*).

Predicting Development

- Students were able to predict the development in a poem, for example, the writer is going to sleep at the end of the poem when she mentions ‘slowly, gently... pleasantly, I drift away’ (*9EL1 Part 1 ‘Poem about Autumn’ Q.6*).

Tone

- Students correctly identified the emotional intent of the speakers. For example, David, host of the radio programme, responded to Betty in an ‘amused’ tone (*9EL1 Part 2 Section A ‘Radio programme – Cheung Chau’ Q.4*) and Mrs Au expressed her feelings of ‘gratefulness’ when talking about her children (*9EL2 Part 1 ‘Radio programme – Public housing’ Q.5*).

Rhyme

- Students showed competence in identifying some simple rhyming words in a poem, such as ‘trees’ and ‘breeze’, when asked to find a pair of rhymes (*9EL1 Part 1 ‘Poem about Autumn’ Q.7*).

Integrated Skills

- Students were capable of combining information from a tapescript with information on a written description of Cheung Chau Bun Festival concerning a ‘bun-scrambling competition’, in order to complete a note-taking task (*9EL1 Part 2 Section B & 9EL2/9EL3 Part 2 ‘Bun Festival’*).

S.3 Reading

Students with the best performance demonstrated their ability in the following aspects:

Text-types

- Students identified the features of different text-types, for example, ‘Introduction page’ (*9ER3 Part 2 ‘Article about the writer of Treasure Island’ Q.8*).

Unfamiliar Expressions

- Students were able to interpret the meaning of unfamiliar words and expressions such as ‘The Hong Kong Arts Festival is a joint effort between local and overseas artists’ meaning artists from Hong Kong and around the world take part in the Festival (*9ER1 Part 1 Q.3*). Another example is ‘when two friends help each other, nothing is impossible’ suggesting that the two boys would survive finally by building a boat to leave the island (*9ER1/9ER2 ‘Book reviews’ Part 3 (47)/(48)*).

Reference Skills

- Students could find the meanings of words with definitions from a dictionary entry, such as ‘work’ to mean ‘what an artist produces’ (*9ER1 Part 2 ‘Magazine article about the Hong Kong Arts Festival’ Q.8*).

Connection between Ideas

- Students were able to use linguistic and contextual clues to interpret ideas in a passage. For example, the book reviewers read the book because ‘My English teacher asked me to read it’ and ‘My friends told me it was a good book’ (*9ER2 Part 3 ‘Book reviews’ (33) & (41)*). Also, Stevenson’s wife was 37 when she met him by referring to the contextual clues – ‘Stevenson was born in 1850’, ‘he met his future wife in 1876’ and ‘she was 11 years older than him’ (*9ER3 Part 2 ‘Article about the writer of Treasure Island’ Q.4*).

Specific Information

- Some students could analyse and integrate relevant points from different texts, such as a memo, an activity schedule and a chart showing preferences, as well as locate visiting information in a programme (*9ER3 Part 1 ‘Programme for a visit’ (19) & (20)*). They could locate information in a timetable for activities, personal profiles, and preferred choices of activities (*9ER2 Part 1 ‘School activities’*).
- Students could distinguish fact from opinion in an article about basketball (*9ER2 Part 2 & 9ER3 Part 3 ‘Magazine article about basketball’ Q. 2*).

Inference Skills

- Students could deduce the meaning of information which was implicit in book reviews. For example, they could infer whether the reviewers liked or disliked the book they read (*9ER1 Part 3 ‘Book reviews’ (30) & (39)*).

Main Ideas

- Students could identify the main idea of each paragraph in an article about basketball (*9ER2 Part 2 & 9ER3 Part 3 ‘Magazine article about basketball’ Q.1*).
- Students could give reasons why basketball is popular in Hong Kong by locating details that supported the main idea (*9ER3 Part 3 ‘Magazine article about basketball’ Q.3*).

Views and Attitudes

- A few students were able to understand the differing views of two book reviewers, one who liked a book – ‘*An Exciting Journey* was certainly entertaining’ and the other who disliked a book – ‘It has nothing to do with my life today’ (*9ER1 Part 3 ‘Book reviews’ (31) & (40)*).

Tone

- Students were able to identify the questioning tone of the writer when he mentioned ‘They’ll say these are the best years of my life / I don’t know if they’re right’ (*9ER1 Part 1 ‘My Life’ Q.4*).

Rhyme

- Students could identify pairs of rhymes – ‘write’ and ‘light’ as well as ‘there’ and ‘chair’ – in the poem entitled ‘*My Life*’ (*9ER1 Part 1 Q.8*).

S.3 Writing

Students with good writing skills were competent in content, organisation, language and features when completing required assessment writing tasks.

Student Exemplars 4 – 6 show well-written compositions that have the following characteristics:

- all relevant content and ideas expressed effectively and clearly
- paragraphs developed with supporting details
- coherent links within and between paragraphs
- good range of vocabulary and language patterns
- few or no grammatical, spelling, capitalisation and punctuation mistakes
- features generally used correctly

Student Exemplar 4

Christmas Celebrations

Ho ho ho! And it's that time of the year again, when everybody is enjoying their holidays!

As we all know, Christmas is celebrated by one and all, so let's take a look at the Christmas Party of one of our school's classes.

Last week, 3A's class Christmas Party was held, and it was wonderful.

Firstly, there was a lot of variety of things to do, for example, there was a table full of different foods. There was chicken, fruit salad, curry fishballs, chips and a lot more. Then there were many drinks, including fruit punch, different fresh fruit juices and of course, soft drinks.

Also, there were games to play, such as twister and uno cards. Everybody had their share of jolly good fun and mischief.

The venue was very nicely decorated. There were the usuals, including the wreath and the beautifully decorated Christmas tree, but there were also some cards, in which were written the wishes of the students.

of 3A. Really creative! There was also a lot of decoration on the ceiling, the windows and, of course, the door.

Now, here comes the best part... Santa Claus! To make the party more exciting, one of the class' teachers was disguised as Santa, and he came and gifted everyone with presents, all wrapped beautifully. But first, before everyone opened up their presents, everyone sang the Christmas carols, loud and clear, so that they could spread the joy of Christmas! Finally, when everyone was too impatient to wait any longer, the presents were unwrapped, one by one. No prizes for guessing how happy everyone was! All were trying to guess what they'd get. Some got toy cars, and some got soft toys, but everybody was happy in the end. The atmosphere was jolly and holly, and there would be no better way than this to celebrate Christmas! Ho, ho, ho and merry Christmas once again!

A letter about English Week (9EW2)

Student Exemplar 5

29th June, 2006.

Dear Peter,

How are you? I enjoy these school days very much because ~~to~~ we had the English Week last week. It was fantastic and all our schoolmates enjoyed this event very much.

Let me tell what we have done ~~do~~ during the English Week. On the first day, we had the English corner. Students went back to their ~~class~~ room classrooms to play Scrabbles, read English novels etc. ~~to~~ When I played Scrabbles with my friends, we made lots of jokes and this game is really funny as it can entertain^{us} and at the same time, we can learn a lot of vocabulary.

Then, ~~in~~ the next day, we had a film show in the school hall. I forgot the name of that film but I remembered it was about aeroplanes. The main character John ~~get~~ got into the aeroplane and met a girlfriend, Sandy. They both made us laugh because of their stupid action. All the students in the hall wanted to watch again. On the third

day, we had ^{the} Singing Contest. The Central Board of our school had invited some of our teachers to sing pop songs. I couldn't imagine that "Old Turtle" ~~which is~~, Mr Leung sang the latest song with some dance. It was really funny. Then, our class also participated in the Singing Contest and we got the Champion! Isn't it great? On ~~#~~ Thursday, we had ^{the} Book Sale. In this Book sale, all the books are in English and they were with discount. I have bought a book called "Can ~~you~~ you Keep a Secret?" and it seems interesting. I am still reading this book. On ~~F~~ Friday, we had the Storytelling Competition. I remembered a F.I student ~~s~~ with ^{her} dramatic facial expression and her lovely voice, she got the champion. It's a ~~petty~~ pity that you didn't watch this competition. On the last day, we had some game booth. It was the event that I loved the most. We could play table tennis by saying an English word during hitting the ball. Also, we ^{had} played puzzles. There's a lot to tell and I won some prizer too.

~~After~~, After watching what I have ~~to~~ written about the English Week, do you want to join us ~~last~~ next year?

A letter giving advice to a friend's brother (9EW3)

Student Exemplar 6

29 June 06

Dear Paul,

Hello. I am Susan, a member of the Student Help Group. I received a letter from your brother, Chris and he asked me to send a letter to you.

Paul, do you know Chris is worrying about you? He always stays in the living room to wait for you as you sometimes go home after midnight. He finds that you talk to friends on the phone for four hours almost every night. Also, your results in school drops. Chris was shocked when he found you started smoking and fought with others. He feels really worried because he finds you get money from your mother's purse without her permission.

These are common problems for teenage boys. I believe you are a good boy, Paul. Maybe someone leads you to such bad behaviour. Paul, you need to correct your behaviour before it's too late. The consequences and impacts will be serious. You should know that smoking is unhealthy. You may suffer from lung cancer. Have you ever thought you will be caught by police if you keeps on fighting with others and stealing things? Don't destroy your life!

Try to change your behaviour now. Don't go home after midnight unless you have reason. Spend less time to talk on phones and study as your school results drops a lot. You should not smoke, fight or steal things anymore. This is for your own good. Paul, I believe you can correct your bad behaviour. Your brother, Chris is so eager to help you. Don't disappoint us!

Best wishes,

Susan (Susan)

S.3 Speaking

In ‘Individual Presentations’, students with good speaking skills were competent in the following four areas: ‘ideas and organisation’, ‘vocabulary and language patterns’, ‘pronunciation and delivery’, and ‘strategies for oral communication’.

- Students expressed ideas that were relevant and could explain opinions with details. They could communicate ideas clearly and coherently.
- Students were capable of using appropriate language patterns and vocabulary. They could speak clearly and fluently, with few errors in pronunciation. They were able to use intonation to enhance their presentations. They showed an awareness of their audience, using good eye contact with the oral assessors.

In ‘Group Interactions’, students with good speaking skills showed competence in conveying ideas intelligibly as well as strategies for oral communication.

- Students could express and respond to ideas that were relevant with supporting details. They demonstrated a good range of vocabulary and spoke clearly and fluently, with few errors in pronunciation.
- Students could use various strategies for oral communication. They were good at maintaining interaction through a range of communicative strategies, such as posing questions to elicit opinions from other group members, encouraging others to elaborate further and consolidating the group’s ideas. They were effective group facilitators.

General Comments on S.3 Student Performances

S.3 Listening

- Students performed well with questions which required them to extract specific information from the spoken texts. They understood sequencing a story in a chronological order. However, they had difficulty in identifying details to support main ideas and grasping main ideas.
- Students generally did poorly in items that required written answers with no multiple-choice options given. Written answers had spelling mistakes which made it difficult for readers to understand.
- Many students were weak in identifying pairs of rhymes such as 'breeze' and 'trees'. They also had difficulty in interpreting the speaker's tone to understand what the speaker wanted to convey.
- Students found inferencing difficult since they were required to generate information which was not explicitly stated in the spoken texts.
- Students had inadequate integrated listening and reading skills when completing a task. The task involved combining information from spoken texts with information on written handouts. Some students failed to write anything in the blanks.

S.3 Reading

- In reading, students were generally capable of locating specific information from different text-types, such as menus, charts and notices. Their ability, however, did not extend to analysing and integrating relevant points from such texts.
- Students did not have difficulty comprehending and inferring the writer's views in new text-types, such as poems, as long as the topics were familiar. Nevertheless, many students did not perform well in tasks which required higher order reading skills. They failed to understand different views in order to make judgments.

- Many students were able to use figurative language in describing their life as it is a common topic '*My life*'. In identifying pairs of rhymes, some incorrectly identified 'own' and 'know' as rhyming pairs perhaps because both words are spelt with the same three letters.
- Students did better at multiple-choice questions than at gap filling items. Some failed to write anything where short answers were required.
- Students at Key Stage 3 would benefit from more exposure to authentic texts, such as film reviews, poems, drama scripts, and newspaper and magazine articles.

S.3 Writing

- In general, students showed competence in understanding features required for the correct form in letter writing and in writing descriptive passages/paragraphs.
- Some students were able to provide relevant content and supporting details to some ideas. They could describe the given pictures with some details. However, a number of them included some irrelevant ideas such as what they did before and after the Christmas party. In writing a letter describing English Week, many students named the activity from the prompts given but could only write one sentence to describe it. When giving advice on behaviour problems, they could express limited ideas, for example, it was not good to talk so long on the phone, but they could not provide any justification. Some students simply copied the problems provided in the prompts.
- Many students could use simple connectives, such as first, second, and finally, in writing an article. However, they had difficulty providing coherent links between paragraphs, and some of them could only develop ideas based on the prompts given.
- Most students had few problems in capitalisation and basic punctuation, but used a limited range of vocabulary and simple language patterns that adversely affected meaning. Many students could not spell common words correctly, for example, 'present' for 'parent', 'exchange' for 'change', 'activites' for 'activities', etc. They confused 'crimes' and 'criminals', 'attract' and 'attack' and some did not know 'Santa Claus' and used 'Christmas Man' instead.

S.3 Speaking

- In ‘Individual Presentations’, students generally expressed adequate ideas that were relevant to the topic when prompted. They could communicate some ideas clearly using conjunctions like ‘then’, ‘because’ and ‘but’ appropriately. They were also capable of using simple language patterns and vocabulary, but with errors that impeded communication. Overuse of ‘will’ was evident when presenting ideas where the simple present tense would have been sufficient in given contexts, such as ‘Chinese New Year’, ‘Teen Hobbies’, ‘Club Activities’, etc.
- Students could speak quite clearly but with some errors in pronunciation. They often dropped end consonants for some words like ‘things’ and ‘activities’ and added end consonants incorrectly, like ‘a lots of’ and ‘specials’. Some had problems with a few consonant blends and digraphs, such as ‘strength’, ‘children’ and ‘shopping’.
- Some students hesitated occasionally and used fillers such as ‘ah’ and ‘hmm’ in their presentations. Others hesitated to the extent that their speech was stilted and difficult for listeners to comprehend.
- Regarding strategies for oral communication, they made occasional attempts to display an awareness of their audience using appropriate eye contact with the oral assessors.
- In ‘Group Interactions’, students could give short, simple responses to ideas that were relevant to the topic. Their responses were generally brief and they seldom elaborated on their own ideas or extended an idea further in their discussions. Some weaker students were very passive and required prompting in order to speak.
- Students used only limited interaction strategies to respond to others, for example, ‘I agree’, ‘That’s a good idea’, ‘What do you think?’, etc.
- In some cases, students were extremely self-conscious about their skills in oral communication and did not utter a word.

Comparison of Student Performances in English Language at Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 TSA 2006

This was the first year that Secondary 3 students participated in the Territory-wide System Assessment at the end of Key Stage 3. The percentage of S.3 students achieving Basic Competency in 2006 was slightly lower than the corresponding percentages of P.3 and P.6 students as shown in Table 7.29.

Table 7.29 Percentage of Students Achieving English Language Basic Competency

Year Class Level	% of Students Achieving English Language Basic Competency		
	2004	2005	2006
P.3	75.9	78.8	79.4
P.6	--	70.5	71.3
S.3	--	--	68.6

It is difficult to make meaningful comparisons among P.3, P.6 and S.3 students in 2006. A more meaningful comparison will be possible in one year's time when the first cohort of students who took the P.3 TSA 2004 complete the P.6 TSA 2007. Only at that stage will it be possible to observe any improvement in their language skills. However, a comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of P.3, P.6 and S.3 students in TSA 2006 enables teachers to modify their teaching strategies and the curriculum at different stages to better suit their students' needs. A comparison of student performances in English Language at Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 TSA 2006 is provided in Table 7.30.

Table 7.30 Comparison of Student Performances in English Language at Primary 3, Primary 6 and Secondary 3 TSA 2006

Level Skill	P.3	P.6	S.3
Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P.3 students were good at identifying key words with / without pictorial cues. Students were capable of identifying main ideas in riddles, but only the best P.3 students showed good ability in identifying main ideas in short stories or letters. Many students could identify information on both the book cover and the contents page of the book. Many students were able to predict the meaning of unfamiliar words, identify the connection between ideas and make simple inferences by using contextual clues. Students found interpreting reference words and inferring meaning of key words in longer texts (e.g. letter) difficult to master at the end of Key Stage 1. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main strength of P.6 students was locating specific information from a text, e.g. notices and posters, and identifying specific information from pictorial cues. Many students were capable of inferring information from simple texts which the writer had not stated clearly. Many students could identify different text-types, such as a narrative and newspaper article. Almost half of the students found interpreting unfamiliar words and personification very difficult. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main strength of S.3 students was locating specific information from more than one text, e.g. activity schedules and bar charts, and extracting simple information. In texts with familiar topics, many students were able to infer the writer's views that were not explicitly stated. Almost half of the students could identify features of different text-types, e.g. 'introduction page'. A considerable number of students could not work out the meaning of unfamiliar words and expressions but were able to understand the use of metaphors and the main theme of a poem with a familiar topic. Almost half of the students could not identify main ideas and unable to use supporting details to deduce main ideas in longer texts.

Level Skill	P.3	P.6	S.3
Writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In story writing, P.3 students did well in writing a story based on given pictures. They were able to provide brief and relevant ideas. However, only the able students showed their creativity and imagination in writing. Students were capable of giving brief ideas / answers to written prompts (about their favourite teacher). Only the able students were capable of giving clear and coherent descriptions with details or examples. Many students had difficulty in using cohesive devices. Many students had problems with verb forms. Spelling mistakes were common in students' writing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P.6 students performed better in completing a narrative than an expository piece of writing. Where tasks provided prompts with simple and familiar contexts, many students were able to provide interesting ideas and relevant details. Many students lacked the ability to organise ideas in paragraphs. They lacked sufficient vocabulary to express their ideas clearly. Many students could write using verb forms in simple sentences although there were spelling mistakes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In general, S.3 students showed competence in understanding features required for the correct form in letter writing, narratives and in writing descriptive passages/paragraphs. Some students were able to provide relevant content and supporting details to some ideas. They could describe the given pictures with some details. When giving advice on behaviour problems, they could express limited ideas but could not elaborate. Many students could use simple sentences with connectives, such as first, second, and finally, in writing an article. However, providing coherent links between paragraphs were lacking. Most students had few problems in capitalisation and basic punctuation. Some, however, used a limited range of vocabulary and simple language patterns that at times affected meaning. Many students could not spell common words correctly.

Level Skill	P.3	P.6	S.3
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many P.3 students were capable of identifying key words including food and places with given cues. Some students were able to identify the connection between ideas. Students were capable of distinguishing stressed from unstressed sounds and many could distinguish initial consonants, e.g. /h/ & /p/. Students could make simple inferences from spoken texts. Students could interpret different intonations about feelings (e.g. happy, sad, puzzled, bored, scared). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most P.6 students were generally successful in identifying key words. Most students had no difficulty in sequencing the pictures in the correct order. Students performed better in extracting factual information from surveys. Capable students showed good inference skills in interpreting a reason for an action in a story. Capable students showed good ability in identifying rhyming words in spoken texts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most S.3 students could integrate simple information from a tapescript to a given written description. Most students were able to arrange a story in a chronological order. Students could extract specific information from stories. Capable students demonstrated good inference skills in interpreting and evaluating information. Capable students showed competence in identifying rhyming words in a poem.

Level Skill	P.3	P.6	§.3
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> About half of the P.3 students were able to read the texts fluently and clearly. They made very few mistakes in pronunciation. The best P.3 students were able to read fluently and clearly with appropriate pausing and intonation. In 'Picture Descriptions', over half of the students could either provide relevant answers to most of the questions or brief answers to some of the questions. Only a small number of students with top scores were able to give elaboration to their answers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P.6 students were able to read all or most of the texts quite clearly and audibly though some words were mispronounced. In 'Presentation', many students were able to provide relevant information and ideas based on the pictures given and communicate their ideas quite clearly despite some mistakes in pronunciation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> S.3 Students could speak quite clearly though with some errors in pronunciation that impeded communication at times. They normally dropped end consonants and added end consonants incorrectly. Some had problems with a few consonant blends and digraphs. In 'Individual Presentations', students generally expressed adequate ideas that were relevant to the topic when prompted. They could communicate ideas clearly and were capable of using simple language patterns and vocabulary, but with some errors that impeded communication. Some students hesitated occasionally when presenting and others hesitated to the extent that their speech was stilted and difficult for listeners to comprehend. In 'Group Interactions', students could give short, simple responses to ideas that were relevant to the topic, but they seldom elaborated on their own ideas or extended an idea further. Most students were able to provide relevant responses to some of the questions raised by the oral assessors. Some could even provide further details on the topics familiar to them. Most of the students gave brief answers to the questions in 'Expression of Personal Experiences'. Some of them were able to provide relevant answers with no or little prompting. The more able students were capable of giving elaboration to their answers.

Level Skill	P.3	P.6	§.3
Speaking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most students were able to respond appropriately to most situations when English was used spontaneously. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some able students could elaborate their ideas when interacting with oral assessors. However, most students had difficulty elaborating their ideas if they were unfamiliar with the topics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For strategies for oral communication, students made occasional attempts to display awareness of their audience using appropriate eye contact with the oral assessors when presenting. Students used limited interaction strategies to respond to others, for example, 'I agree', 'That's a good idea' and 'What do you think?' in group interactions.