

7. ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Results of Primary 3 English Language in TSA 2008

The territory-wide percentage of P.3 students achieving English Language Basic Competency in TSA 2008 was 79.3%. There was a slight decrease in the percentage achieving basic competency in 2008 relative to performance levels in 2006 and 2007.

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 four sub-papers for Listening and four sub-papers for Reading and Writing, comprising a total of 100 items and 111 score points. The duration of each Listening sub-paper was approximately 20 minutes, while each Reading and Writing sub-paper was 25 minutes. The oral assessment consisted of sixteen sub-papers. The composition of the P.3 written sub-papers is provided in Table 7.1a and that of Speaking sub-papers is given in Table 7.1b.

Table 7.1a Composition of P.3 Written Sub-papers

Written Assessment				
Basic Competency	No. of Items (Score Points)			
Listening	3EL1	3EL2	3EL3	3EL4
	20(20)	21(21)	20(20)	19(19)
Reading	3ERW1	3ERW2	3ERW3	3ERW4
	28(28)	29(29)	26(26)	29(29)
Writing	3ERW1	3ERW2	3ERW3	3ERW4
	1(7)	1(7)	1(7)	1(7)

Table 7.1b Composition of P.3 Speaking Sub-papers

Speaking Assessment				
Basic Competency	No. of Items (Score Points)			
L3-R-3-P3BC (reading aloud)	3ES01 & 3ES03 2 (8)	3ES05 & 3ES07 2 (8)	3ES09 & 3ES11 2 (8)	3ES13 & 3ES15 2 (8)
L1-S-3-P3BC (short answers)	3ES01 – 3ES04 4 (16)	3ES05 – 3ES08 4 (16)	3ES09 – 3ES12 4 (16)	3ES13 – 3ES16 4 (16)
L3-S-1-P3BC (Picture description - pronunciation)	3ES02 & 3ES04 2 (4)	3ES06 & 3ES08 2 (4)	3ES10 & 3ES12 2 (4)	3ES14 & 3ES16 2 (4)

P.3 Listening Items

Each student was required to attempt one of the four sub-papers (about 20 minutes), each of which consisted of two listening tasks. All listening materials were played twice. Descriptions of the listening assessment tasks are provided in 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	4
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	35
Testing Focus	Descriptor	No. of Items
L2-L-2	Showing some awareness of the use of a small range of language features highlighted in short and simple literacy / imaginative spoken texts	1
TOTAL		40

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 L2-L-3-P3BC	Pets <i>3EL1 / 3EL2 Part 1</i>	Multiple Choice	8(8)
L2-L-1-P3BC L2-L-3-P3BC	Questions about the Reader <i>3EL1 / 3EL4 Part 2</i>	Multiple Choice	12(12)
L2-L-1-P3BC L2-L-3-P3BC	Grandma's Birthday <i>3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 2</i>	Multiple Choice	13(13)
L2-L-1-P3BC L2-L-3-P3BC	Poem <i>3EL3 / 3EL4 Part 1</i>	Multiple Choice	6(6)
Testing Focus	Item Description	Question Type	No. of Items (Score Points)
L2-L-2	Poem <i>3EL3 / 3EL4 Part 1</i>	Multiple Choice	1(1)

P.3 Reading Items

Each student was required to attempt three reading tasks in one of the four Reading and Writing sub-papers (25 minutes each). About 15 minutes was allotted for completion of 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	46
L2-R-6-P3BC	Applying a small range of simple reference skills	8
Testing Focus	Descriptor	No. of Items
L2-R-4	Showing some awareness of the use of a small range of language features highlighted in short and simple literacy / imaginative texts	2
TOTAL		56

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

Basic Competency	Item Description	Question Type	No. of Items (Score Points)
L2-R-5-P3BC	My First Pet <i>3ERW1 / 3ERW3 Part 1</i>	Multiple Choice	7(7)
L2-R-5-P3BC	The Three Frogs <i>3ERW1 / 3ERW4 Parts 2A & 2B</i>	Multiple Choice	12(12)
L2-R-5-P3BC	Peter's Holiday <i>3ERW1 / 3ERW2 Part 3</i>	Multiple Choice	8(8)
L2-R-5-P3BC	School Notice <i>3ERW2 / 3ERW4 Part 1</i>	Multiple Choice	10(10)
L2-R-6-P3BC	Book Cover <i>3ERW2 / 3ERW3 Part 2A</i>	Multiple Choice	4(4)
L2-R-5-P3BC L2-R-6-P3BC	Contents Page of a Book <i>3ERW2 / 3ERW3 Part 2B</i>	Multiple Choice	7(7)
L2-R-5-P3BC	At the Farm <i>3ERW3 / 3ERW4 Part 3</i>	Multiple Choice	6(6)
Testing Focus	Item Description	Question Type	No. of Items (Score Points)
L2-R-4	My First Pet <i>3ERW1 / 3ERW3 Part 1</i>	Multiple Choice	1(1)
L2-R-4	At the Farm <i>3ERW3 / 3ERW4 Part 3</i>	Multiple Choice	1(1)

P.3 Writing Tasks

Each student was required to attempt one writing task in one of the four Reading and Writing sub-papers (25 minutes each). About 10 minutes was allotted for completion of 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

Basic Competency	Item Description	No. of Items (Score Points)
L2-W-3-P3BC	The Frog	1(4)
L2-W-4-P3BC	<i>3ERW1 / 3ERW2 Part 4</i>	1(3)
L2-W-3-P3BC	The School Picnic	1(4)
L2-W-4-P3BC	<i>3ERW3 / 3ERW4 Part 4</i>	1(3)

P.3 Speaking Tasks

Two tasks were designed for P.3 oral assessment. The first task was ‘Reading Aloud and Expression of Personal Experiences’ (hereafter RA & PE) which required students to read aloud a text of approximately 35 – 40 words in length and then to answer a set of questions based on the theme of the text. Students were assessed on their reading fluency and response to the Oral Examiners’ questions. For this task, students were given two minutes to prepare for the assessment, one minute to complete the RA text and two minutes to complete the questions for PE. The second task was ‘Picture Description’ (hereafter PD) which required students to answer the Oral Examiner’s questions based on a single picture or series of smaller pictures. Students were assessed on the relevancy and response to the questions as well as their pronunciation. For PD, students were given three minutes to study the question paper and two minutes to complete the Oral Examiners’ questions.

Each task represented half of the total sub-papers used for the oral assessment. RA & PE comprised sub-papers *3ES01*, *3ES03*, *3ES05*, *3ES07*, *3ES09*, *3ES11*, *3ES13*, *3ES15* and PD comprised *3ES02*, *3ES04*, *3ES06*, *3ES08*, *3ES10*, *3ES12*, *3ES14*, *3ES16*. A set of four sub-papers (two RA & PE tasks and two PD tasks) were alternately assessed in an assessment session. The sub-papers were also linked to a theme: English Lessons (*3ES01* & *3ES02*), Music (*3ES03* & *3ES04*), Healthy Life (*3ES05* & *3ES06*), Going to School (*3ES07* & *3ES08*), Books and Dreams (*3ES09* & *3ES10*), Sports (*3ES11* & *3ES12*), Food (*3ES13* & *3ES14*) and Home (*3ES15* & *3ES16*). A total of four sessions were conducted over the two days of assessment held on 6 and 7 May 2008. 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-R-3-P3BC	Reading Aloud <i>3ES01, 3ES03, 3ES05, 3ES07, 3ES09, 3ES11, 3ES13 & 3ES15</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>3ES01, 3ES03, 3ES05, 3ES07, 3ES09, 3ES11, 3ES13 & 3ES15</i>	Providing short answers to short and simple questions
L3-S-1-P3BC	Picture Description <i>3ES02, 3ES04, 3ES06, 3ES08, 3ES10, 3ES12, 3ES14 & 3ES16</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 2008

P.3 Listening

The performance of students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence showed that they were best at identifying key words with given cues and main ideas in short, spoken texts. They also demonstrated competence in distinguishing between basic differences in intonation and were able to discriminate between numbers correctly. They could also understand the connection between ideas by identifying a small range of cohesive devices.

Key Words

- Most students at this level were able to identify key words based on a wide range of familiar concepts. These included food and drinks – pizza, spaghetti and lemon tea (3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 2 ‘Grandma’s Birthday’ Q.6 and 3EL3 / 3EL4 Part 1 ‘Poem’ Q.2), places and districts – Wetland Park and Shau Kei Wan (3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 2 ‘Grandma’s Birthday’ Q.7 and 3EL1 / 3EL4 Part 2 ‘Questions about the Reader’ Q.2) and age (3EL1 / 3EL4 Part 2 ‘Questions about the Reader’ Q.3). The majority of students could also identify the price of a magazine and the frequency of reading that magazine correctly (3EL1 / 3EL4 Part 2 ‘Questions about the Reader’ Q.6 & Q.7). They were also able to identify pictures of cooking and a messy room with straightforward verbal cues (3EL3 / 3EL4 Part 1 ‘Poem’ Q.4 and 3EL1 / 3EL2 Part 1 ‘Pets’ Q.5).

Main Ideas

- Most students were capable of identifying the main ideas in a conversation about the activities Peter and his family would do on Grandma’s birthday. They were able to choose ‘watching butterflies’ and ‘walking around the fish pond’ as the correct answers after listening to ‘Later, we’ll also watch beautiful butterflies at the ‘Butterfly Garden’ and ‘Oh, I love fish. We’ll take a walk around the fish pond to see the fish.’ (3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 2 ‘Grandma’s Birthday’ Q.8). They could also identify the dog as a good pet for Mary with the help of explicit verbal cues after listening to ‘A turtle, a rabbit and a hamster will not be good pets for you...You can’t teach them to do anything. I think a dog is a good pet for you.’ (3EL1 / 3EL2 Part 1 ‘Pets’ Q.2).

Intonation

- Most students were able to identify a speaker's tone of voice regarding their feelings of happiness and sadness (3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 2 'Grandma's Birthday' Q.1 & Q.5).

Sounds

- Students performed better this year on distinguishing numbers. Most students were able to distinguish '75' from '60', '65' and '70' and '7' from '17', '27' and '37' correctly (3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 2 'Grandma's Birthday' Q.4, 3EL1 / 3EL2 Part 1 'Pets' Q.3).

Connection between Ideas

- Students were able to understand the connection between ideas using 'because', 'and' and 'but'. They could identify 'the dog jumped on her' as the reason why Mary's Mum was afraid of dogs by interpreting ideas linked by 'because'. (3EL1 / 3EL2 Part 1 'Pets' Q.4). When asked what kinds of stories the reader liked best, they could successfully interpret 'animals' as the correct answer after listening to 'The cars and sports are okay, but I like "Animal of the Week" the best' (3EL1 / 3EL4 Part 2 'Questions about the Reader' Q.8).

P.3 Reading

Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence were able to identify key words, main ideas and unfamiliar words with the help of contextual and pictorial cues. Regarding the application of a small range of simple reference skills, students could obtain information about the reading materials from book covers and tables of content. They were also capable of making simple inferences by reading contextual clues.

Key Words

- Students could identify the price of tickets for the Snake Show correctly from a school notice (3ERW2 / 3ERW4 Part 1 'School Notice' Q.8). Students could also identify key words in a story. When asked to identify the location of the Princess' bedroom, students were capable of matching key words 'at the top of the castle' with pictorial cues correctly (3ERW1 / 3ERW4 Part 2A 'The Three Frogs' Q.3).

Main Ideas

- With the help of pictorial cues, students were able to identify the main ideas in a postcard. Students could identify the picture of the Fish World by interpreting the contextual clues, 'It has hundreds of beautiful fish, shells and plants inside.' (3ERW1 / 3ERW2 Part 3 'Peter's Holiday' Q.4). Students were also able to identify that Tom did not see a horse by interpreting the main ideas in the second stanza of the poem:

Cats and sheep,
Ducks and cows,
These are the things,
I see now.

(3ERW3 / 3ERW4 Part 3 'At the Farm' Q.1)

Book Concepts

- Students were able to identify the title of the book as 'Happy Island' from the other information on the book cover such as 'Easy Holiday Press' and 'Written by Anne Wilson' (3ERW2 / 3ERW3 Part 2A 'Book Cover' Q.1). They could also identify information from the table of contents. They could identify the correct page that Mary should turn to if she wanted to find a place for dinner (3ERW2 / 3ERW3 Part 2B 'Contents Page of a Book' Q.5).

Inference Skills

- Students were able to make simple inferences. They could infer that Mary could go to Star Pool by using the contextual clues, ‘Swimming Day’ and ‘Bring a swimsuit and a towel’ in the school notice (3ERW2 / 3ERW4 Part 1 ‘School Notice’ Q.1). By interpreting ‘Pet Day’ and ‘Bring your pet with you’, students were able to infer that Mary could bring her dog on the Pet Day (3ERW2 / 3ERW4 Part 1 ‘School Notice’ Q.4).

Unfamiliar Words

- Many students performed well in predicting the meaning of unfamiliar words by making use of pictorial cues and contextual clues. With the help of pictorial cues, students were able to predict the meaning of ‘Tweet! Tweet!’ as the sound of birds singing (3ERW1 / 3ERW3 Part 1 ‘My First Pet’ Q.4). Students could also predict the meaning of the unfamiliar word ‘Twister’ and choose the correct picture of the Twister by using contextual clues, ‘It is very tall. When you slide down it, you go round and round in circles.’ (3ERW1 / 3ERW2 Part 3 ‘Peter’s Holiday’ Q.6).

Student Exemplar 1

Content

- Student is able to write a factual account of the story based on pictorial prompts with little supporting detail (“Mary is a good girl in the school”).
- The description is clear and an ending to the story is given.

Language

- Student uses a small range of sentence patterns, cohesive devices (‘lastly’) and prepositions (‘on’, ‘with’) fairly appropriately, with some grammatical and spelling mistakes (“the teach talk with classmass, the teach show a frog to class, the frog jump Oh Mary, Mary is scarth. lastly. The teacher got the frog in the box, Mary is not scart the frog”).

Mary is a good girl in the school, the
teach talk with classmass, the teach
show a frog to class, the frog jump
Oh Mary, Mary is scarth. lastly. The
teacher got the frog in the box, Mary
is not scart the frog.

Student Exemplar 2

Content

- Student is able to provide a factual account of the story based on the pictorial cues, with almost no supporting details (“Mary is a clever girl”).
- The description is quite clear and an ending to the story is provided (“So teaches take frog in the box”).

Language

- Student uses a small range of vocabulary, sentence patterns and/or cohesive devices fairly appropriately, with some grammatical (“But the frog jump to the Mary”) and spelling mistakes (‘teaches’).

Mary is a clever girl. One day, teacher talked about a
frog. Teacher show a frog to the children. But
the frog jump to the Mary. Mary is afraid. So
teaches take frog in the box.

The School Picnic (3ERW3 / 3ERW4 Part 4)

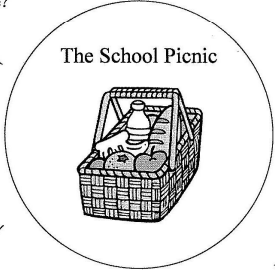
Part 4
Mary is writing a letter to tell her friend, Kate, about her school picnic.
You are Mary. Write the letter in about 30 words.
You may use your own ideas or the following questions to help you:

Where did you go for the picnic?

What did you see?

What did you do?

The School Picnic



What kind of food did you eat?

How did you feel?

When was the school picnic?

8th May, 2008

Dear Kate,

Love,
Mary

END OF PAPER

In this writing task, students were asked to write about a school picnic with the help of prompts. Students with minimally acceptable levels of basic competence were able to provide brief and relevant ideas to the questions. The ideas presented were quite clear but lacked supporting details. They were able to use a small range of vocabulary and sentence patterns and/or cohesive devices fairly appropriately, with some grammatical and spelling mistakes.

Student Exemplar 3

Content

- Student is able to write brief and relevant ideas/responses to the questions (“In the end, We feel very happy”).
- The ideas are quite clear.

Language

- Student uses a small range of vocabulary (‘cute’, ‘afternoon’, ‘Hong Kong park’), sentence patterns and/or cohesive devices (‘last week’, ‘in the afternoon’, ‘and’) fairly appropriately.

Dear Kate,

last week, I had a school picnic. We went to Hong Kong park. I played with my friend. We saw a cat. The cat was cute. In the afternoon, We ate an apple, milk and potato. In the end, We feel very happy.

Love,

Mary

Student Exemplar 4

Content

- Student is able to write brief and relevant ideas/responses to the questions (“I ate baerd, milk, apple and water”).

Language

- Student uses a small range of vocabulary, sentence patterns (“Picnic is on the 4th May, 2008”) and/or cohesive devices fairly appropriately.
- Student displays a good use of language by using an appropriate greeting as an opening for the letter (“How are you?”).

Dear Kate,

How are you?

I go to the school picnic

Picnic is on the 4th May, 2008

I played bag game with Kary

I ate baerd, milk, apple and

water I am happy!

Love,

Mary

P.3 Speaking

Depending on the size of the school, a sample of either 12 or 24 students were randomly selected to participate in the oral assessment. No attempt was made to report results for schools in terms of the percent achieving basic competency in speaking because of the small sample size. However, a descriptive summary of the overall performance levels of students can be found in the ‘General Comments on P.3 Student Performances’ section.

Performance of the Best P.3 Students in TSA 2008

P.3 Listening

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

Key Words

- Students were competent in identifying unfamiliar places. They could distinguish ‘Tsuen Wan’ from ‘Wan Chai’, ‘Sheung Wan’ and ‘Chai Wan’ (3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 2 ‘Grandma’s Birthday’ Q.2).

Main Ideas

- Students were able to identify the main idea from a short spoken text which contained more than one piece of information. When asked what Peter and his family would do on Grandma’s birthday, students were able to understand that they would go to see some birds and take pictures of the birds when students heard, ‘We’ll see Pui Pui the crocodile and some birds. Then, we can take photos of the animals.’ (3EL2 / 3EL3 Part 2 ‘Grandma’s Birthday’ Q.8).

Connection between Ideas

- Students were able to identify the connection between ideas by using cohesive devices such as ‘and’ in the spoken text. Students could identify the number of fish that Mary’s Dad had when they heard, ‘He has two really big fish, and fifteen small ones.’ (3EL1 / 3EL2 Part 1 ‘Pets’ Q.7). More able students could also identify what Sally should do before going to bed – set her alarm clock by interpreting, ‘After dinner, finish your homework and brush your teeth, Then set your alarm clock just before you sleep.’ (3EL3 / 3EL4 Part 1 ‘Poem’ Q.6).

P.3 Reading

Students with the best performance did well in the following areas.

Key Words

- Students could make use of key words, ‘sitting next to a pond’ and ‘looked up at a castle on top of a hill’ to identify where the three frogs were and choose the correct picture (3ERW1 / 3ERW4 Part 2A ‘The Three Frogs’ Q.1).

Main Ideas

- Students were able to identify the main idea that Peter would get 2 tickets for \$10 for the Hiking Trip by using the contextual clues ‘Price: \$10 (Buy one ticket and get one free)’ (3ERW2 / 3ERW4 Part 1 ‘School Notice’ Q.3). They could also identify the main idea from the reading text ‘One rainy night, I took a train to an old castle on a mountain...’ and interpret it as a travel story. (3ERW2 / 3ERW3 Part 2B ‘Contents Page of a Book’ Q.7).

Book Concept

- Students could correctly identify ‘Easy Holiday Press’ as the publisher of the book (3ERW2 / 3ERW3 Part 2A ‘Book Cover’ Q.4). Capable students could also locate information on the table of contents. They correctly interpreted that Mary should read Chapter 1 to know what to do before her trip and should turn to Chapter 4 to find a place to stay on Happy Island (3ERW2 / 3ERW3 Part 2B ‘Contents Page of a Book’ Q.1 & Q.4).

Inference Skills

- Students were able to interpret the implied meaning of some sentences in the story. They were able to determine that the frogs jumped all day to get to the top of the hill by reading the text ‘When the sun came up, the three frogs started to jump...They only got to the top of the hill when the sun went down.’ (3ERW1 / 3ERW4 Part 2A ‘The Three Frogs’ Q.4). Students could also infer that Peter’s family would go to the Water Park again on 25th March 2008 by reading two contextual clues in the postcard – the date the postcard was written (24th March 2008) and ‘Mum loves the park and says Dad will take us to the park again tomorrow.’ (3ERW1 / 3ERW2 Part 3 ‘Peter’s Holiday’ Q.8).
- Students could infer meaning from the poem and were able to identify the picture of a building with many flats where Tom lived from the contextual clues in the poem:

Soon there are tall buildings, streets and noise,
Back at home, I see my games and toys.
(3ERW3 / 3ERW4 Part 3 ‘At the Farm’ Q.2)

- Students were able to make inferences from the information in the table of contents. They could infer that Chapter 2 of the book was about places people liked to go from ‘Hot Spots to Visit’ (3ERW2 / 3ERW3 Part 2B ‘Contents Page of a Book’ Q.2).

Reference Words

- Students could correctly interpret reference words. Students could identify the pronoun 'it' meaning 'the Fish World' (3ERW1 / 3ERW2 Part 3 'Peter's Holiday' Q.5).

Unfamiliar Words

- Students were able to interpret the meaning of unfamiliar words correctly with the help of contextual clues in the story. They could interpret that the Princess disappeared when the frogs kissed her by identifying the picture of an empty bed with smoke from, 'Then, there was a puff of smoke and they could not see the princess.' (3ERW1 / 3ERW4 Part 2B 'The Three Frogs' Q.6).

Onomatopoeia

- Capable students could correctly answer a question on onomatopoeia. When asked what noise Jack heard, they were able to interpret that 'Meow' was the sound of a cat crying (3ERW1 / 3ERW3 Part 1 'My First Pet' Q.5).

P.3 Writing

Students with the best performance were able to complete the writing tasks with outstanding performance. They could provide content that made a story logical/interesting/imaginative based on pictures with many supporting details in *3ERW1 / 3ERW2*. Students could provide relevant ideas with many supporting details or examples to the prompts in *3ERW3 / 3ERW4*. In terms of language, students at this level were able to use a range of vocabulary, sentence patterns and cohesive devices fairly appropriately with few or no grammatical and spelling mistakes.

Student Exemplar 5

Content

- Student is able to provide a logical and interesting story based on the pictures with many supporting details (“... the frog is green and ugly. Suddenly the frog jumps out of the cave”).
- The description is very clear and coherent.

Language

- Student uses a range of vocabulary (‘suddenly’, ‘kindness’), sentence patterns (“However his classmate Peter help Mary to carry the frog back to Miss Chan’s cave”) and cohesive devices (‘but’, ‘suddenly’, ‘however’, ‘at last’) appropriately.
- There are few grammatical and spelling mistakes (sholder, scare).

Mary is having a General Study lesson. Her teacher Miss Chan is talking about frogs. Mary is now listening to Miss Chan. Miss Chan has a frog to show the class, but the frog is green and ugly. Suddenly, the frog jumps out of the cave. It jumps on Mary's sholder. She is very scare. However, his classmate Peter help Mary to carry the frog back to Miss Chan's cave. Mary thanks Peter and gives him a little gift for her kindness. At last, they become great friend and play together all the time.

Student Exemplar 6

Content

- Student is able to provide an interesting story based on the pictures, with many supporting details (“It jumped everywhere and the children squealed like pigs who are about to be cooked”, “Mary was sent to the hospital”).
- The description is very clear and coherent and an ending is provided (“From then on, no one is allowed to bring real live animals to school again”).

Language

- Student uses a range of vocabulary (‘escaped’, ‘squealed’, ‘fainted’), sentence patterns (‘However, as she opened the box to get the frog out, the frog jumped up and escaped!’) and cohesive devices appropriately (‘However’, ‘When’).
- There are few or no grammatical and spelling mistakes.

Mary is learning about frogs when she is in school in the General Studies Lesson. After the teacher said that, we all about frogs. The teacher shows us a real life frog!

However, as she opened the box to get the frog out, the frog jumped up and escaped! IT jumped everywhere and the children squealed like pigs who are about to be cooked. When the frog jumped on Mary, she fainted!

Bee Bee! Bee Bu! Mary was sent to the hospital. One hour later she woke. From then on, no one is allowed to bring real live animals to school again.

The School Picnic (3ERW3 / 3ERW4 Part 4)

Student Exemplar 7

Content

- Student is able to provide relevant ideas/responses to the questions with many supporting details or examples. (“Last Sunday, my classmates, teachers and I went to a school picnic”, “When we arrived, we found a shady spot under a big green tree”). The ideas are very clear and coherent.

Language

- Student uses a range of vocabulary (‘brightly’, ‘white clouds’, ‘frisbee’, ‘wonderful’), sentence patterns (“When we arrived, we found a shady spot under a big green tree”) and cohesive devices appropriately (‘when’, ‘in the afternoon’, ‘in the evening’, ‘so’, ‘after’) with few or no grammatical and spelling mistakes. Student displays a good use of language by appropriately opening and closing the letter.

Dear Kate,

How are you? I am fine. Last Sunday, my
classmates, teachers and I went to a school
picnic. The sun was shining brightly and the
white clouds were high up in the sky.

When we arrived, we found a shady spot
under a big green tree. We put a mat on
the floor. Some people were playing frisbee, some
people were cycling and some people were playing
football. I played football with my friends.

In the afternoon, we were hungry. We ate
sandwiches, potato chips, chicken wings and drank
orange juice. We had a nap after we ate things.

In the evening, we were tired so we went to
school. I had a wonderful day.

Love,

Mary

Student Exemplar 8

Content

- Student is able to provide relevant ideas/responses to the questions with many supporting details or examples. (“I rode a bicycle. It was fun. I can ride quickly”, “I skipped with a rope. I can skip twenty nine times. It was difficult!”). The ideas are very clear and coherent.

Language

- Student uses a range of vocabulary (‘difficult’, ‘forget’, ‘skipped’), sentence patterns (“After. I’m hungry. So, I ate some sandwiches and drank some juice”) and cohesive devices (‘Last Tuesday’, ‘then’, ‘after that’) appropriately with few or no grammatical and spelling mistakes. Student displays a good use of language by appropriately closing the letter (“On that day, I am happy and I wouldn’t forget it”).

Dear Kate,

Last Tuesday was picnic. I went to my Big
Country Park.

I rode a bicycle. It was fun. I can ride
quickly. Then, I played football. I won. I am
very happy. After that, I skipped with a rope. I
can skip twenty nine times. It was difficult!

After playing, I went to look at the
birds. They were beautiful and lovely. Then, I
looked the butterflies. They were pink and yellow.
They are cute. After, I'm hungry. So, I
ate some sandwiches and drank some juice.

On that day, I am happy and I
wouldn't forget it.

Love,

Mary

P.3 Speaking

- In the ‘Reading Aloud’ component, students with the best performance were able to read a short text fluently and clearly with appropriate pausing and intonation. They made very few or no pronunciation mistakes when reading words such as ‘signs’ (3ES07), ‘early’ and ‘junk’ (3ES13). They could also use appropriate intonation when asking a question, “Who is it?” (3ES15) and when exchanging a greeting “Oh, how nice to see you!” (3ES15). Students could also vary their pace and rhythm when reading a dialogue:

Mum says, “Please be careful on the way.”

“Yes, Mum. I’ll be okay.” (3ES07)

- In the ‘Expression of Personal Experiences’ component, students with the best performance could provide relevant answers to most of the questions naturally and readily with some elaboration. They could talk about their Music lessons at school (3ES03), what books they liked to read (3ES09) and the sports they liked to play (3ES11).
- In the ‘Picture Description’ component, students with the best performance could provide relevant answers to most of the questions naturally and readily with some elaboration to the questions. They could answer ‘Why/Why Not’ questions and provide an ending for a story (3ES04) & (3ES10). Students could also speak clearly and readily with very few pronunciation mistakes.

General Comments on P.3 Student Performances

P.3 Listening

- As in previous years, students still performed best at identifying key words. They were able to identify different types of key words when verbal cues were given. These included key words related to food, people, age, places, activities and price of an item. However, fewer students were able to identify adjectives, e.g. quiet.
- Students were able to identify a speaker's tone of voice regarding their feelings of happiness or sadness.
- Students showed that they could distinguish numbers correctly. They were able to distinguish '7' from '17', '27' and '37' as well as '75' from '60', '65' and '70'. However, it is still difficult for them to distinguish '15' from '50'. Moreover, fewer students were able to identify a number of consonants such as /J/ (Jenny), /K/ (Kenny), /L/ (Lenny) and /T/ (Tenny).
- Students showed improvement in identifying main ideas in spoken texts. They were able to identify the activities Peter did with his family on Grandma's birthday (e.g. watch butterflies, walk around a fish pond). They could identify main ideas in longer segments of spoken texts.
- Students were competent in identifying the connection between ideas which were clearly linked by the cohesive device 'because'. However, when the ideas are connected with other cohesive devices such as 'too' and 'then', fewer students were able to identify the connection between ideas.
- Some students were able to identify pairs of rhymes in a poem, e.g. 'book' and 'cook'.

P.3 Reading

- Students' performance in identifying key words in reading is not as strong as in listening spoken texts. Students could identify some key words with the help of pictorial cues in a notice, such as the price of the ticket for Snake Show and things to bring for the Snake Show. However, students found it difficult to identify key words in a postcard. Fewer students were able to identify the names of the people who were

on holiday and the person who would receive the postcard. Moreover, students were still not capable of identifying key words in longer texts such as stories.

- Students could identify the main ideas in a comic successfully. They could name the title of the comic. However, they were still unable to identify main ideas embedded in longer texts such as a postcard. When asked to identify the picture of the Water Park, only half of the students were able to do it by interpreting the main ideas from contextual clues, 'There are many water rides to go on here. There is also a big, round glass Fish World.'
- Students' performance related to book concept declined slightly this year. Most students were able to identify the title on a book cover. However, fewer students could identify the writer, the publisher and the content of the book. Students still found it difficult to locate information on the contents page, such as reading chapter 4 for information on finding a place to stay for a holiday.
- Students could make simple inference with straightforward contextual clues. They could infer 'rabbits' and 'hamster' as the animals that Mary could bring on the Pet Day. However, students were still weak in making inferences in longer texts such as stories and postcards. Only some students were able to infer that the frogs were sad from contextual clues, 'Oh dear! The castle is so tall.'
- Students' performance in identifying pronoun reference is consistently weak. They had difficulty identifying what 'it' means in the comics and postcards.
- When given pictorial cues, students did well in identifying meanings of unfamiliar words. Students could identify the picture of a Twister in a postcard and the sound of birds in a comic strip. Students were more willing to try and interpret the meanings of unfamiliar words.
- Only half of the students were able to identify rhyming words and onomatopoeia in poems correctly. Students were able to identify pairs of rhymes in a poem where the end consonants were spelt the same, e.g. 'day' and 'say'. Only the more capable students could understand that 'Meow' was the sound of a cat crying.

P.3 Writing

- In general, the performance of students in writing *'The School Picnic'* is better than *'The Frog'*. Students are asked to write about his/her school picnic. Questions are given as prompts to help students: 'Where did you go for the picnic?', 'What did you see?' and 'When was the school picnic?'. Students were able to respond to the questions with brief but relevant answers. Even though the prompts given were arranged in the form of a mind map, students were able to organize their writing into the correct sequence of events. In contrast to the writing of a story about a frog in the classroom, students were given a word prompt for each of the three pictures and were asked to write an ending for the story. They had to transform the pictures into words and organize their ideas into a story. They were able to write the story in the correct sequence, however, they lacked the vocabulary apart from the word prompts given. For many students, their ability to organize ideas in story writing was weak. Students' performance in guided writing (with prompts) proved better than that in open-ended writing tasks. The performance of students in the two writing tasks is listed below.

The Frog

- For the writing task, half of the students were able to write a short story about a frog based on the given pictures. They could provide a factual account of the story based on pictorial cues such as a teacher, a frog, General Studies lesson, the frog jumps and frightened students. However, the students did not give any supporting details in their writing: 'Mary is in the classroom. In General Studies lessons, Miss Lee talks Chapter three...Miss Lee show them a frog, then the frog jump to Mary arm'.
- A limited number of students could write interesting / imaginative / logical stories with many supporting details: 'Mary is having a General Study lesson. Her teacher Miss Chan is talking about frogs...Miss Chan has a frog to show the class, but the frog is green and ugly. Suddenly the frog jumps on Mary's shoulder. She is very scare...Peter help Mary to carry the frog...Mary thanks Peter...' The description was very clear and coherent and an ending to the story was given.
- In terms of language, some students were able to use a small range of vocabulary, sentence patterns and/or cohesive devices with some grammatical and spelling mistakes, e.g. 'One day, Miss Wong have a frogs in the classroom. Suddenly the frong jump on Mary. She was cried.' Grammatical and spelling mistakes like 'Miss Wong have' and 'a frogs' and 'frong' were found. However, the student was able to use 'Suddenly' to link up ideas.

- Nearly half of the students used a very limited range of vocabulary and sentence patterns, with many grammatical and spelling mistakes. ‘Miss Wong talk the frog’ and ‘Teachers talk the forg’ demonstrated limited vocabulary and sentence patterns skills in writing. Grammatical and spelling mistakes were also found in students’ writing: ‘Is it the fong cure?’, ‘Mary feed happy’, ‘The gril and clessmates are running.’, ‘Tearcher show the frog give Mary see.’

The School Picnic

- Nearly half of the students were able to write about the school picnic with the help of given prompts. Their ideas were brief but relevant, ‘Last week, I had a school picnic...I played with my friend...In the afternoon, we ate an apple, milk and potato. In the end, we feel very happy’. The ideas are quite clear, though without much elaboration.
- A limited number of students were able to provide relevant ideas to the topic with some supporting details, ‘Today is my school picnic...I went to picnic by shool bus. I saw many trees and grass. We played hide-and-seeK...We ate rice, speghettis, fishes, vegetables and sweets. These food are yummy. I felt excited and glad...’ The description was clear and coherent.
- In terms of language, nearly half of the students were able to respond to the questions with appropriate vocabulary, sentence patterns and/or cohesive devices with some grammatical and spelling mistakes, e.g. ‘I went to my school picnic. I saw many animals, I see a cow, dog, cat, horse. I ate a apple, bananas and some milk of my lunch. I was very excit.’. Grammatical and spelling mistakes like ‘I see a cow, dog, cat, horse’ and ‘a apple’ and ‘excit’ were evident.
- Some students used a limited range of vocabulary and sentence patterns, e.g. ‘I see every grass. We play the Games. We eat food. We play very happy. We is tired.’ A limited range of sentence patterns are used. There are also many grammatical and spelling mistakes such as ‘I go the picnis is play’, ‘It is many food and dirk’, I feet tired’, and ‘We are go to the picnic on 5th May, 2008.’

P.3 Speaking

- In the 'Reading Aloud' component, half of the students were able to read a text fluently and clearly with very few or no pronunciation mistakes. Students could read simple sentences such as 'I like running and jumping' (3ES11) and 'I'm at home' (3ES15) without difficulty. They could also read some words that required the use of phonic skills such as 'rubbish' (3ES05), 'twelve', 'frogs' (3ES09), and 'knock, knock' (3ES15).
- In the 'Expression of Personal Experiences' component, more than half of the students needed prompting from Oral Examiners and responded hesitantly to the questions. Students tended to perform better when answering wh-questions such as, 'Who is your English teacher?' (3ES01), 'How do you go to school?' (3ES07) and 'Where do you live?' (3ES15) and could provide factual answers. They did not respond as well to open-ended questions such as 'Do you like going to school? Why/Why not?' (3ES07) or 'How do you feel when people visit you? Why?' (3ES15) Students with the best performance were able to respond naturally to most of the questions with little or no prompting and could provide relevant answers.
- In the 'Picture Description' component, almost half of the students could provide relevant answers to most of the questions with little or no prompting. They could also respond to most of the questions naturally. With familiar topics such as 'Activities in the English Room' (3ES02) and 'Riding the School Bus' (3ES08), students were generally able to provide brief answers to some of the questions. However, some students had difficulty describing how and why Peter fell ill (3ES06) or the reasons for the boy feeling sad when he lost the football game (3ES12). Students with the best performance were able to provide relevant answers to most of the questions with some elaboration. For pronunciation, more than half of the students could speak quite clearly despite a few mistakes in pronunciation while quite a number of students could speak clearly with very few mistakes.

Comparison of Student Performances in English Language at Primary 3 TSA 2006, 2007 and 2008

This was the fifth 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 2006, 2007 & 2008

Year	% of Students Achieving English Language Basic Competency
2006	79.4
2007	79.5
2008	79.3

A comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of P.3 student performances in TSA 2006, 2007 and 2008 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 2006, 2007 and 2008

Year Skill	2006	2007	2008
Listening	<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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying key words with given cues is one of the strengths of P.3 students. • Students were able to distinguish some initial consonants. • The majority of students were able to understand basic differences in intonation when a person was happy or surprised. • Compared with last year, fewer students could distinguish stressed from unstressed sounds. • Many students were able to make simple inferences from the spoken texts. • Most students were able to understand the connection between ideas using 'also' and 'but'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • P.3 students were still good at identifying key words with given cues. They were able to identify a wide range of familiar concepts. • Students were able to distinguish numbers like '7' and '17'. • Most students were able to identify a speaker's tone of voice regarding their feelings of happiness and sadness. • Some students were able to distinguish stressed from unstressed sounds. • Quite a number of students were able to make simple inferences from the spoken texts. • Most students were able to understand the connection between ideas using 'because'.

Year Skill	2006	2007	2008
Reading	<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). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students were capable of matching key words with pictorial cues correctly. • Compared with last year, fewer students were able to identify main ideas in reading texts using contextual clues. • Many students were capable of matching book titles with book covers. They could also identify the writer and illustrator of a book. • Some students could predict the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contextual clues. • Students were able to make simple inferences. However, students had difficulty making inferences in longer texts. • Many students could understand ideas linked by 'and'. Students with the best performances were able to interpret reference words. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students could match key words with or without pictorial cues. • Students were able to identify main ideas in reading texts using contextual clues or pictorial cues. • Compared with last year, fewer students were capable of identifying the writer, the publisher of a book and in locating information on the table of contents. • Students performed well in predicting the meaning of unfamiliar words by using contextual clues and pictorial cues. • Students were able to make simple inferences. However, they were still weak in making inferences in longer texts, e.g. stories. • Students with the best performances were able to interpret reference words correctly.

Year Skill	2006	2007	2008
Writing	<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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students were able to write about a topic with given prompts. They could also write a factual account of a story based on given pictures. • Few students could write interesting or imaginative stories. • Spelling mistakes were still common. • Students had difficulty with verb forms. • More students were able to use cohesive devices such as 'and' and 'then' in their writing. • Students still gave brief ideas in their writing. Only a minority of students were able to provide relevant ideas with details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When given prompts about a topic, students were able to provide brief but relevant ideas. When writing a story, they could provide a factual account based on given pictures. • Few students could write interesting or imaginative stories. • Spelling mistakes were common. Some students were not able to spell some common words correctly, e.g. 'hpple' for 'apple', 'classmass' for 'classmate', 'baerd' for 'bread', 'sandwirts' for 'sandwiches', etc. • There were also many grammatical mistakes in students' writing, e.g. 'The frog is jump to Mary', and 'I can saw tree, flower and frog.' • Students were able to use cohesive devices such as 'and', 'then', 'however' and 'but' in their writing. • Students provided brief ideas in their writing. Only students with the best performances were able to provide relevant ideas with supporting details.

Year Skill	2006	2007	2008
Speaking	<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. 	<p style="text-align: center;">-- --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About half of the students were able to read a text fluently and clearly with very few or no pronunciation mistakes. • In 'Expression of Personal Experiences', some students provided relevant but brief answers to questions. Students with the best performance could provide elaboration to some questions. • In 'Picture Descriptions', some students were able to provide brief answers to questions. Students with the best performance were able to provide elaboration to some questions. 	<p style="text-align: center;">-- --</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For 'Reading Aloud', half of students were able to read fluently and clearly with few pronunciation mistakes. Words which required phonic skills were more challenging for some students. • For 'Expression of Personal Experiences', more than half of the students responded hesitantly to questions. Questions which elicited factual answers were generally more manageable than open-ended questions. • For 'Picture Description', nearly half of the students could provide relevant answers to most of the questions with little prompting. They could respond more naturally on topics such as <i>English Lesson</i> and <i>Going to School</i> but had more difficulty describing the feelings of the characters and providing an ending to the story.