General Comments

Performance on the English paper was slightly lower than in previous years, with a slight decrease in the pass rate noted. Nevertheless, basic reading comprehension and basic writing skills seem to have been acquired by the great majority of candidates, which is encouraging. As highlighted in previous reports, there are aspects of grammar which continue to be problematic to an important number of candidates – the use of the present and past perfect tenses, the use of structures involving modal auxiliaries and the do-support and irregular verb forms.

In reading comprehension, most candidates coped comfortably with the direct retrieval of information explicitly stated in the text. Difficulties arose when they had to show an overall understanding of the text, infer from the information provided and rely on contextual clues to deal with less common lexical items.

In writing, candidates coped more comfortably with producing short pieces of text. The influence of French and Creole syntax was felt in certain cases as in *Mother puts the clothes dry* but in general the performance of candidates in basic sentence writing was satisfactory. In longer pieces of writing, as has often been the case in the past, candidates mixed tenses wrongly and often wrote in simple structures only.

As is often highlighted, the Examiners’ report is meant to be read not only by Standard 6 teachers but by the school as a whole. Heads of schools are therefore encouraged to discuss the content of this report with Educators teaching at different levels.

Specific Comments

Section A

Section A, which makes up 60% of the examination paper, tests the Essential Learning Competencies in grammar, vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing skills. These competencies are vital to be able to gain an acceptable level of proficiency in English, and as such are expected to be acquired by the great majority of candidates.

Question 1 (Miscellaneous Grammar and Vocabulary items)

Question 1 assesses a mixed bag of grammatical elements and basic vocabulary through multiple choice questions.

The following items were the best done:

Item 3  Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world
Item 4  The tourists were doing their shopping at the market
Item 5  Schools were closed because of the heavy rain
Item 6  *My father gave me a bicycle for my birthday*

Item 10 *Tom has completed the work, hasn’t he?*

Item 11 *“Who has already completed the exercise?” asked the teacher*

The following items were found difficult by an important number of candidates:

Item 7  *The bird flew away after eating the seeds*

Finding the right verb form proved to be difficult here, with candidates often being misled by the word *after* and wrongly choosing the simple past tense *ate*.

Item 8  *John has already taken his breakfast*

The use of the present perfect tense continues to be problematic to candidates. Most of those who got this item wrong seem to have realised that the action happened in the past but chose the wrong option *took* instead.

Item 9  *My dog is very friendly*

Candidates were expected to show that they knew that the adjective form of *friend*, namely *friendly*, was required here. *Friendship* proved to be a popular distractor.

Item 13  *Sam is a very studious boy*

This vocabulary item also proved to be challenging, with the right form of the verb *to study*, namely *studious*, required in the context given. *Study* was a common wrong answer, despite the fact that it could not syntactically fit in the given sentence.

Item 14  *The bus had already gone when Prema reached the bus stop.*

Candidates had to read this sentence carefully and realise that the action had already happened (*Prema reached the bus stop*) to be able to choose the correct option. Many, however, failed to do so and chose *has already gone*, showing that they did not pay attention to the grammatical clues in the question.

Item 15  *He walked as fast as he could to reach school on time.*

Knowledge of the common English comparative structure *as.....as* was being assessed here. A significant number of candidates chose *so fast as*, which is not an acceptable structure in English.
Item 16  

*The workers are free. They don’t have anything to do.*

The challenge for candidates was to see that in this negative structure the pronoun *anything* was required. An important number of candidates chose the distractor *nothing* but the use of double negatives is not acceptable in modern Standard English.

Item 20  

*He did not take part in the competition.*

Finding the right verb form in structures involving the do-support has been a recurrent challenge for candidates, and while there has been some progress, it continues to be found challenging by a significant number of candidates.

In sum, an analysis of the performance of candidates in question 1 reveals that some areas are tackled very satisfactorily by many candidates. The use of comparatives, simple coordinating conjunctions and tag questions, for example, did not pose difficulty. However, the use of the present and past perfect tenses and finding the right verb form in structures involving the do-support continue to be problematic and further work in those areas would be welcome.

**Question 2A (Basic Reading comprehension)**

Question 2A assesses basic reading comprehension, with the questions asking essentially for the retrieval of direct information from a given text. This year, the text set was a short letter written by a son who had gone abroad to Reunion Island and who was writing to his parents. The scenario was well within the experience of most candidates and there were very few instances of candidates not understanding the context.

On the whole, this question was well attempted by candidates, which is an encouraging finding. This suggests that basic reading skills have been acquired by the great majority of candidates. A particular issue with this question over the years has been candidates’ tendency to lift indiscriminately from the given text. While this tendency has receded significantly, it is still useful to remind Educators that little credit can be given to answers that pick out whole sentences and give excess information. Examiners are looking for precise and accurate answers and that often means answering using one word or a short phrase.

Most of the questions were well attempted this year, with the exception of item 7:

**Item 7**

*Give one word from the passage that describes Mafat Primary School*

Candidates failed to pay due attention to the instructions here, which was to give one word from the passage. Many lost marks by lifting whole phrases or sentences.

**Question 2B (Reading Comprehension)**
Question 2B also assesses reading comprehension but goes beyond direct retrieval of information. As has been the case over the years, questions involving retrieving information explicitly provided by the passage were the best done. However, drawing inferences, overall understanding of the passage and knowledge of less common vocabulary items are still challenging to a noticeable number of candidates. The open ended questions also proved to be difficult and this illustrates that writing out answers is still a problem.

The following items were the least well done:

Item 2  

*Misha had cleared a spot on her shelf to place the _____________

The correct answer was that the spot on the shelf had been cleared to accommodate the trophy and this was explicitly stated in the text. A significant number of candidates, through careless reading, thought that it was the fish itself which would be placed on the shelf.

Item 8  

*She pulled it back gently but it did not budge. Budge means______________

This question assessed candidates’ ability to deal with a less common lexical item and this proved to be difficult to great number of candidates. Candidates should be trained to rely on contextual clues to make out the meaning of unfamiliar words. The context here would have made it obvious that the fishing line was not moving, but many candidates chose *appear* as an option.

Item 9  

*Why do you think the turtle was allowed to go back to sea?*

This question called for an overall understanding of the passage and the correct answer was that the turtle was allowed to go back to sea because it was an endangered species. The inference that the turtle was allowed to go back since it was not a fish and this was a fishing competition was also considered acceptable.

**Question 3 (Sentence Writing)**

The performance of candidates on the sentence writing task was generally satisfactory. Educators are reminded that examiners are looking for syntactically correct and grammatically meaningful sentences which make use of all the given words, irrespective of the length of the sentence. The perennial issues with agreement, the use of French/Creole structures, the spelling of their/there were still noted this year.

The following is highlighted for the benefit of Educators:

1. Verbs will be given in the infinitive form. Candidates are free to conjugate the verb in any tense they deem appropriate.
2. Nouns can be used in both the singular and plural forms.
3. All the given words must be used to write a sentence. Omitting any of the given words will be penalised.
4. The given words must be used within the **same** sentence. Using the words in different sentences will be penalised.

5. The word class of a given word cannot be changed (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs must be used as such). For example, it would not be possible to change *heavy* into *heavily*.

Item 2  help – work

This was generally well attempted. Simple sentences like *I write with my pencil* were perfectly acceptable and candidates did not have much difficulty in coming up with meaningful sentences.

Item 3  sports – healthy

A major difficulty encountered here was the influence of French syntax. While *faire du sport* is a correct structure in French, saying *do the sports* is not acceptable in English. The correct form *I do/practice sports* was required.

Item 4  basket – heavy – slowly

The specific challenge for candidates in this item was to position the adverb *slowly* correctly and this was achieved by the majority. Some candidates lost marks by changing the given adverb *slowly* into *slow*, which is not acceptable to examiners.

Item 5  drought – vegetables

This item proved to be difficult to some candidates who confused the word *drought* with *bought* and consequently wrote meaningless sentences. Many also showed that they did not know the meaning of the word *drought*.

Item 6  wash – clothes – dry

The influence of Creole and French syntax was very present here, with candidates coming up with sentences like *Mother washes the clothes and put them for drying* or *Mother washes the clothes and put them dry.*

**Section B**

Section B, carrying 40% of the marks, assesses higher order skills in reading, writing and the application of grammatical knowledge in context.

**Question 4 (Tenses and Word Formation)**

This exercise assesses students’ ability to choose the right tense in a given context and transform words appropriately. Knowledge of morphological rules and tenses enable students to write the correct form of words given within a context to make it meaningful and coherent.
However, students have difficulties with irregular verbs regular, making errors such as *goed* for *went*. While the performance of the majority of students in this exercise was generally disappointing, the items that were best done related to word transformation to adverbs or adjectives.

4.1  *...when a hare was in trouble and went/had gone to seek the help of her friends.*

This item was generally well done, with the need for the simple past tense or past perfect tense identified by many candidates. Common wrong answers were *go* and *was going*.

4.2  *One day, she heard a hunter’s dogs approaching/approach ...*

This item was only successfully attempted by a small number of candidates. The most common wrong answers for this item were *was approaching* and *approached*.

4.3  *Without losing time, she went to the horse and asked him to carry her away on his back.*

The majority of candidates performed well on this item. Some, however, kept the infinitive form of the verb.

4.4  *He immediately refused, saying that he was busy.*

The transformation of the noun *immediate* to its adverbial form *immediately* was generally well attempted but many candidates struggled to spell it correctly.

4.5  *“I am sure your other friends will help/shall help/can help/could help/help/will not help/won’t help you.”* He said.

Even though various answers were acceptable for this item, the majority of candidates were unable to conjugate the correct form of the verb within the context. The most common wrong answers used were *are helping, would help, had helped, have helped, helped*.

4.6  *So she asked the bull, who replied ...*

Many candidates were able to identify that the past tense was needed but struggled to write *replied* correctly.

4.7  *“I am very sorry, but I have an appointment with my dentist.”*

The performance of candidates on this item was disappointing. Most common errors were the use of *appointed, appointmnetly, appointing, appointly*. Examples of misspelt words were *apointement, appointment, appoitement*.

4.8  *...he would not like to interfere as dogs have been known to eat sheep as well as hares!*

The past participle form of *know* was required for this item. Candidates fared poorly in this item giving *knew, know, knowed, knowing* as wrong options.
4.9 ...he would be unable to help as he could not take the **responsibility** of doing something...

The noun form of the word was required here. Students had difficulty to correctly spell the word, resulting in loss of marks. Most common answers were responsible, responsibility, responsibly.

5.0 **Finally**, the hare took to her heels and escaped in time!

The adverbial form of the word was required here. Quite a significant number of candidates did poorly on this item giving the following as answers final, finaled, finaling.

**Question 5 (Cloze Test)**

The cloze text aims at allowing students to apply their understanding of a text and to identify the most appropriate vocabulary item for the given gaps.

**Item 1**  *The fruit measures about 9 centimeters in diameter and **weighs** about 100-150 grammes.*

This item was found difficult by the majority of candidates. Most common wrong answers given were takes, has, is, are. The clue was in the word grammes, which indicated that the notion of weight was being discussed here.

**Item 2**  *The sweet oranges are more popular **than** the bitter ones.*

The appropriate word was found by a majority of candidates. Most common mistakes were use of to, of, or, and.

**Item 3**  *Oranges **contain/have/possess/provide** plenty of nutrients.*

This item was not satisfactorily tackled, with most candidates failing to come up with a plausible answer.

**Item 4**  *It is an excellent source of vitamin C...*

This item in the cloze test was outstandingly well done by the majority of candidates showing that they have a good mastery of prepositions.

**Item 5**  *It also contains vitamin A, which is **important/required/needed/necessary** for maintaining a healthy skin and good vision.*

A panoply of answers was acceptable for this item which made the item scoring for an overwhelming majority of candidates.

**Item 6**  *Oranges have been valued for **their/having** beneficial effects on our health.*

This item was found difficult by the majority of candidates.
Item 7  
*Fresh oranges can be* **bought/eaten/obtained/consumed** anytime, anywhere.

A verb was required here and many candidates were able to identify this. A variety of options was possible.

Item 8  
*You just have to wash them under running* **water** *to remove surface dirt.*

The words *wash* and running were strong clues that it was the word water which was required here. Some still found it difficult to find the correct word giving instead *tap, liquid* as answers.

Item 9  
*Then you only have to peel/remove/cut/slice the skin and enjoy it.*

Candidates had to realize that before enjoying the orange, the skin had to be removed or peeled. Options like *throw, put, wash, clean* could therefore not be accepted.

Item 10  
...*slicing the fruit horizontally into two* **parts/halves/pieces** *and removing the flesh with a spoon.*

The clues for this item lay in the concept of slicing horizontally into two – which would lead to the notion of *halves or parts being obtained.*

**Question 6**

The criteria to assess the composition writing are:

- Grammatical accuracy
- Creativity
- Organisation and coherence
- Vocabulary

This year’s essay topic asked students to narrate an incident of a friend missing while on an outing. A number of candidates wrote lengthily about the outing rather than the incident, which entailed loss of marks. It is therefore important for candidates to read questions carefully and to understand what the focus of the essay is, rather than focus on peripheral matters.

Many students used their imagination very effectively and as a result scored high marks. Brighter candidates wrote clear detailed focused grammatically accurate and coherent responses. Essays at the lower end of the ability range lacked originality and substance. Such responses also lacked focus and were repetitive which resulted in low scores. Grammatical mistakes were numerous in those essays and there was a clear indication of lack of writing and reading practices. To attain above average grade in the composition component, educators should try to develop the skills below in students:

- To use original ideas in essay writing
- To generate ideas on their own without relying entirely on the canvas given
- To develop the ability to express themselves in a clear and logical manner
- To employ suitable vocabulary to enliven their sentences and ideas

Compiled below are sample essays arranged in ascending order in terms of grades obtained. The descriptions give an insight on what is expected from candidates at this level.

**Sample 1**

Today I am going to shopping. At the shopping center, I look my friend Ryan. He is very sad because my friend Aftaab is very ill. Ryan is going at the hospital to look my friend Aftaab. Aftaab is few blood. I am give Aftaab my blood. Aftaab is very very happy. Tomorrow Aftaab is dead. It is a sadly day today. My best friend is dead and his wife Haissa is very very sad. Today Aftaab is dead it is a sadly day. His wife is ugly.

I go to my grandmother because is very ill I taken hospital I mother come see for mother and mother is more sad because she mother very ill and I prepared lunch for them I came to the hospital and often then food to eat and tomorrow grandmother reached home I mother is very happy because your mother is find
Sample 2

One day, you went on an outing with your class. While returning, you noticed that one of your friends was missing. We are going to the seaside. He and your friends are sitting on the tree. Kevin and Vanesha are swimming on the sea. Priya are eating the bread. Sanjana and kavish are playing a volley-ball. Kevin and Vanesha are eating a ear-cream. Your friends we are playing a football on the road. We are happed in the end. Kevin and Vanesha are sitting in the tree. We are drinking your coca. We are eating the sandwich Kevin and Vanesha and your friends are noticed the coquache. Kevin and Vanesha and your friends are swimming on the sea. We are decide are eating a boulet and drinking a juice-Vanesha and Sanjana are swimming on the sea. Vanesha decide we are going at the home. Kevin and Vanesha and your friends are going to the Bus-stop. We are sitting on the Bus for at Curepipe. We are arvels to 4Bornes the bus are incident. We are you feel about the incident. The police are going to go a hospital Kevin and Vanesha and your friends are belécé on the hands, arm, legs, foot and hair. To-morrow Kevin and Vanesha are going at home. Your friends we are returning at home. We are very much.

The above two sample essays demonstrate the inability of few candidates to construct meaningful simple sentences with a subject and a predicate with a single independent clause. They do not address any aspect of the expected outcome of the essay. Ideas are fragmented and most sentences are grammatically incorrect. The content of both essays are inadequate and are poorly and illogically reasoned.
This piece of writing is poorly developed. It is a clear example of use of spoken English in students’ writing which hampers the essence of the ideas to be conveyed. Spoken English is rarely acceptable in a formal essay at CPE level. The body of this essay lacks focus and the purpose of the essay emerges only at the end of the work.

Sample 3
It was a Sunday afternoon. The weather was fine. I tell my mother for the outing were we went. I said my mother it was tomorrow. My mother said I can went. I went to phone my friends Siroumi, Emi, Quincy, Darshinee, Dayana and Isabelle. Every one went outing. I am very happy. It was Monday morning. The weather was fine. I arrived at school my friend was very happy. My teacher said everyone went in the bus. We went at the seasode for the outing. In the bus my friend and I decide to sing any song “Sage”. Arrived at the seaside we went down and went buying some ice-cream. We went to a walk. When we are walking suddenly I noticed that one friend is missing. What we can do. My friend sai we must tell Miss Govinden. I went to tell my teacher that Isabelle is missing. We went to the toilet. She were there. I am very sad on that day.

Sample 4
It was a friday morning. The weather was fine. The sun was shining brightly in the sky. Our class went on an outing. At 9 am the bus had already came and all the pupils entered in the bus. We are going to Flic-en-Flac beach. After sometime the bus had reached and all the pupils were very happy to see flic-en-flac beach. All pupils took their bags and take off the bus. At 15.00 pm all the pupils entered in the bus. Suddenly I saw that my friends sam was missing. I tell the teacher that Sam was missing. The teacher was worried and didn’t know what to do. Suddenly the teacher saw sam with his mother in his car and all the pupils was feeling very happy.

Similar to the previous sample, this essay, though simple and straightforward, failed to meet the standard of written English expected and consists of numerous grammatical, spelling errors that obstruct the mechanics of the language. This essay clearly lacks the necessary ingredients to score highly.
Sample 5

It was a Friday afternoon. My friends and I went on an outing in Port-Louis at Apravasi Ghat.

While returning in the bus, I started to count the number of friends. But to my big surprise I could not see one of my friend named Stacy. Then I told my other friends that Stacy was not in the bus. Then we told the driver in the bus to return to Apravasi Ghat. Arriving there we started to look where she is. But we could not see her. As she was my best friend, I restarted for her again with the help of my friends.

Then at last we saw her. I was very happy and asked her where she was and I was very afraid of the incident. Then at last we go back home.

Sample 6

During the second term, it was planned that the C.P.E pupils would go at Plaines Champagne forest to spend the day. Early that morning everyone paid for the fees. Then three special buses arrived and we immediately set off. I sat beside my best friend Tom. We went straight off at Plaines Champagne. There we picked some ripe and juicy wild small fruits. But Tom, the greedy boy was attracted by some red mangoes a bit further near a pond. Two hours later, we were very hungry and left for Blue Bay Beach. All the pupils took their seats. Great was my surprise to see that Tom had not yet come. So I told my teacher, Mr sam that Tom was missing. Mr Sam went to each in each bus but Tom was missing. Mr Sam went to search in each bus but Tom was nowhere to be seen. We were all worried. All the pupils went in the forest to look for him. Some of them were shouting ‘Tom’ Tom’ Where are you”. But there were no answers. Suddenly we saw Tom dozing off under a tall mango tree. Everyone gave a sight of relief. Then Mr Sam woke him up and we went back to school. Unfortunately we were unable to go to Blue Bay beach as it was late. At school our parents were waiting anxiously for us-our return.
The ideas of this essay are neither clichéd nor stereotyped. The canvas given is adequately used with added creative thinking. This essay offers a pleasant reading that demonstrates the ability of this candidate to construct sentences and ideas in a coherent manner.

Sample 7

It all happened last Friday afternoon. After having visited the pamplemousses garden, the children made their way to the bus to return to school. “The outing was very interesting” said my friend to me. Suddenly when all the children had entered the bus I noticed that Rajesh, one of my friends was missing. He was the laziest boy of the class.

The teacher was red with anger as it was not the first time that he had done that. She quickly went to search for him. Meanwhile everybody was worried in the bus. All of a sudden, something caught my attention. I came out of the bus and moved nearer. Great was my surprise to see Rajesh admiring the tigers. I quickly rushed to the spot and brought him to the teacher. The latter was scolded and he entered the bus with a sad face. Afterwards we returned to school where our parents were waiting patiently for us. Since that day Rajesh promised that he will never leave the queue to go see other things.

What a memorable day for Rajesh!

The content is this composition displays evidence of independent thinking. Although the sentences are simple and straightforward, what renders this essay pleasant to read and deserving of high marks is the ability to organise ideas in a coherent manner. Ideas are relevant to the canvas given and this candidate dives straight in the topic not loitering too much on unnecessary details.
Sample 8

One fine summer morning, after having enjoyed ourselves at Flic-en-Flac, our bus headed towards Plaine Champagne. On arriving there, we were amazed by the beautiful, panoramic landscape of vast fields of sugarcane and forest with large and tall clumps of trees. Everyone was enjoying this view, except my best friend, Dick. The latter was wondering on the opposite side of the road, plucking guavas which he popped into his mouth. Soon after, the rest of the children got into the bus to return to school. While climbing the stairs of the vehicle noticed that my friend was not along with me.

“Perhaps he has already gone to his seat?” I thought. Unfortunately I found that it was empty. Suddenly the bus started and we set off to school. Without losing time, I darted to my teacher to inform him about the missing child. Since the children were making a lot of noise, I whispered to my teacher what was the matter. After having heard the news, the teacher told the driver to return to the forest although we nearly reached school. The other pupils were informed. So, on arriving there, search parties were organized. As for Dick, he was gradually going deeper in the forest until he realized that he was lost. Panic-stricken, he was rushing here and there but unfortunately, he could not find his way out. Feeling tired, he sat on the back of a wild pig, misjudging it to be a rock. The animal went wild with anger and chased the poor boy who was scared to death. She yelled loudly “Help me! Help me!” All of a sudden we heard the desperate cries of someone and knew that it was Dick’s voice. Without delay, we dashed in his direction and we were speechless in surprise in finding that Dick was being run after by a wild pig. We picked pebbles and threw it at the animal who ran away in fear. Dick was glad to see all of us and he could finally heave a sign of relief. Then we returned to school and went home with a smile. What a funny incident it was!

I am sure that it will remain an unforgettable day for Dick!

Creativity, fluent style, coherent ideas, vast and rich vocabulary are all in evidence in this outstanding piece of writing. This candidate shows maturity of thought to present a pleasant piece of writing and captivates the attention of readers from the opening line. Clear organization including introduction, body, conclusion and transitions in this candidate’s writing reflects a high standard of written English and concern for grammar, spelling, punctuation and mechanics. Style and tone is appropriate to the audience and objective of the question.
To the teacher:

Teachers are advised to promote extensive reading in their students. Teachers should give enough practice to students to learn how to organise their ideas and foster coherence in their ideas. Even though a repeated mistake is penalized once only, teachers are advised to train students to review their work and avoid basic grammatical, spelling and punctuation mistakes. The quality of the language for the overwhelming majority of candidates can hence be improved through constant reading and writing activities.

Essay writing is an integral part of students’ learning experience. Essays written can be read in class and ideas shared in groups. To further stimulate the creativity of students, simple real life writing tasks can be initiated by teachers to captivate the attention of any reader.

Writing model answers/expressions, setting a canvas or a picture composition and simply asking students to write a composition of 150 words does little to develop the creative side of the students. A range of captivating activities that will encourage student to develop a passion for reading and writing are available online. Such activities could be implemented as from Standard IV. Following are few websites that may help teachers in preparing creative and appealing lesson plans:

http://www.vinu.edu/cms/opencms/academic_resources/writing_center/wcgenresou.html

http://universitywriting.shu.ac.uk/good/spoken.htm

http://www.everythingesl.net/lessons/


Mastering grammar exercises starts with building on students’ spoken language proficiency. Good pronunciation leads to good spelling which in turn reinforces grammar rules. Effective writing skills are initiated by successful and meaningful communication. Teachers should endorse the philosophy of purposeful communication before embarking students in any written grammatical exercise.

The attention of the teachers is drawn to the fact that textbooks are not the syllabus and they should not reckon it as their sole guiding source.

It is primordial to build resilience in students to become autonomous learners.