



**BOTSWANA
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COUNCIL**

**PSLE
PRINCIPAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

**SETSWANA COMPOSITION AND LETTER WRITING
2023**

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INTRODUCTION

This report is aimed at presenting the Principal Examiner's observations about the 2023 candidates' responses to composition and letter-writing tasks. The report highlights both the strengths and weaknesses that candidates displayed in their work, hence appropriate utilization of the information would go a long way in improving teaching and learning.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Generally, the 2023 cohort seems to be weaker than the previous one. Regarding the difficulty level of the composition and letter, it was established that they were clear and accessible, and the expectation was that almost all pupils would be able to write without any problem. Although this year's letter writing was formal one, the topic was not beyond their level. However, it is worrisome to note that the same concerns that are raised year in and year out keep on recurring and for this year there has been a significant decline in performance on Communication, particularly on letter writing where they have been performing better in the previous years. In composition writing as in previous years candidates continue to get very low marks. This low performance in both dimensions is worrisome, because it could be an indication that the report sent to schools is not utilized to the fullest although it aims at giving educators feedback on students' performance and as a result assists students in improving the results.

What continues to be of major concern in both composition and letter writing is that candidates do not seem to understand the difference between stating and explaining as stipulated in the guidelines. Explaining requires more than just mentioning, it requires substantiation or expansion of the main points. Candidates continue to display a tendency of stating or mentioning a point/idea without any supporting statements. This usually leads to production of skeletal work which is not very informative. In some instances, candidates produced a list of different unsupported main points within a paragraph rather than a discussion of one point which is elaborated on.

Of concern also is the issue of formatting for both the essay and letter. Each form of writing has its peculiarities, and candidates need to adhere to the given format for each form. The issue of handwriting continues to be of major concern. Learners need to write neatly and legibly including the shaping of letters to try and differentiate capital letters and small letters.

All in all, the general performance of candidates in Communication continues to be low and this year, the declined performance in letter writing exacerbated the problem.

COMPOSITION WRITING

The candidates were expected to write about “BOTLHOKWA JWA GO TSAYA KAROLO MO METSHAMEKONG YA MO SEKOLONG” and they were expected to build their subject matter around the guidelines that were provided. The guidelines were to be used as a way of focusing the essay. It is very critical for the guidelines to be elaborated to show that there is a clear understanding of the process of essay writing. The candidates were also expected to showcase their communication and writing skills by using different aspects of the Setswana Language to sustain the interest of the reader. Some observations were made about essay writing as outlined below.

Confinement to the Guidelines

Most candidates still regard guidelines as questions to be responded to instead of using the as stipulated. This results in narrow presentations which are not informative enough to meet the required standard. Rather than presenting fully fledged expanded ideas, most candidates provided two or so sentences per guideline which defeats the expectations of essay writing. It is expected that the candidates beef up their points to display good communication skills and knowledge of the Setswana language.

1.COMMUNICATION

Candidates were expected to display an understanding of the topic by providing information on the reasons and importance of the sporting code that they participate in. They were expected to display their communication skills.

The following are the ways in which the candidates were expected to address the guideline.

Elaboration of ideas:

Ke ne ka kgatlhêgêla motshameko wa kgwele ya dinao ka gore o nthusa go itshidila mmele. Ke kile ka bo ke tshabêlêlwa ke malwetse motlhofo mme fa e sale ke simolola go tshameka kgwele ya dinao ga ke tshabelelwe ke malwetse thata.

NB:

the learner was expected to construct the topic sentence. In the example above, the topic sentence is, “ke ne ka kgatlhêgêla motshameko wa kgwele ya dinao ka gore o nthusa go itshidila mmele”

The second sentence which forms an elaboration supports the topic sentence thus, it is:

“Ke kile ka bo ke tshabelelwa ke malwetse motlhofo mme fa e sale ke tshameka kgwele ya dinao ga ke tshabelelwe ke malwetse thata”.

Elaboration using examples:

Ke ne ka kgatlhêgêla motshameko wa kgwele ya dinao ka gore o tlisa maduo a a molemo mo botshelong jaaka go itshidila mmele, go ikgapha mo dilong tse di bosula le go dira botsalanô le batho ba bangwe.

NB:

the topic sentence is “Ke ne ka kgatlhêgêla motshamekô wa kgwele ya dinao ka gore o tlisa maduô a molemo mo botshelong”

Examples

“jaaka go itshidila mmele, go ikgapaha mo dilong tse di bosula le go dira botsalano le ba bangwe”

Observations

- Some of the candidates stated the main points and explained the reasons in a different paragraph. The candidates, instead of explaining the reasons digressed to talk about other things, and in the next paragraph they would then try to elaborate on the main idea.
- Some would start well with a topic sentence and then go on to state various reasons for preferring the sport code without expanding on any of the given reasons.
- Some of the candidates who tried to explain the reasons why they preferred the sporting code, just wrote a run-on sentence.

Candidates need to differentiate between stating/mentioning and explaining because explaining requires more than just mentioning. The main idea must be stated then followed by supporting points which serve to elaborate the main idea, thus why they prefer the sport code. The candidate needs to note that an explanation is done well if they start a paragraph with a topic sentence and then elaborate it with supporting sentences as shown above. Supporting the main idea is very significant because it's a way of expanding the body of the essay leading to formation of proper coherent paragraphs.

(a)Mentions the name of the spot code in which they participate, in her/his school.

Candidates were to name the sporting code they participated in at their school.

Observations

- Most of the candidates mentioned the sporting code that they participate in their school.

- Some of the candidates generally mentioned the sporting code that they participate in BUT NOT related to the sporting code in the school thus either participating in a home team or social clubs.

From the responses generally, it was clear that the candidates were able to interpret and address the guideline effectively.

(b) Explain why they prefer the sporting code/what aroused their interest in that.

Candidates were to give a clear explanation of why they prefer that sport code.

Observations

- Quite a number of candidates managed to give a full explanation of why they preferred the sporting code. They were able to give reasons why choose that sporting code and elaborate on the idea/reasons.

(c) Explains how this sport code is important to him/her.

This guideline requires the candidate to give a detailed explanation as to why his/her preferred sport code is of importance to him/her. They were required to at least give a full explanation of one importance. Even if the candidates could state many ways in which the sports code is important to them at least they were to pick one reason and fully explain the importance.

Example

Motshameko wa kgwele ya dinao o botlhôkwa fela thata mo nna ka gore o nthusitse go dira botsalanô le bana ba dikolo di sele, go bona mafelo ka go farologana le go itshidila mmele. Botsalanô jo bo nthusitse fela thata ka nako ya fa re ipaakanyetsa ditlhatlhobo tsa rona. Ke ne ke nna ke ruta le bana bangwe ba re kopaneng kwa metshamekong ya dikolo tsa rona.

Observations

- Few candidates were able to give a detailed explanation as to why his/her preferred sport code is of importance to him/her.
- Some candidate stated the importance without an elaboration hence they lost a mark.
- Majority of the candidates just stated the importance even going further to list them without making any attempt to at least pick one importance and explain it clearly.
- Some candidate mentioned the general importance of sport without specifically referring to themselves.

NB: As stated earlier, teachers must emphasize the difference between stating and explaining. The candidate's inability to explain calls for interventions to assist learners in acquiring the skills of how to elaborate.

(d)Creativity

Show some creativity in their writing.

Many candidates are greatly challenged in creativity. Almost all candidatures lose a mark for creativity. This area requires candidates to showcase imaginary skills to synthesize information and present it in a way that flows. This involves weaving the main attributes of the essay together to produce a coherent piece of writing. They were also expected to bring together the main attributes of the essay to produce a solid piece of writing that has coherence within and across paragraphs. It calls for the usage of various sentences, varied vocabulary, and thinking beyond the guidelines to ensure that the essay arouses the interest of the reader and at the same time ensures that there is a flow of ideas. Creativity also entails skills use of language components such as figurative language, ideophones, interjectives, collective nouns, descriptive words, punctuation, use of rich diction/vocabulary for a particular effect. It also entails the ability to play around with Setswana words creating an exciting piece of work.

NB: There is an urgent need for teachers to instill this important skill on the learners. As they plan, they should priorities creative writing skills and give learners more practice.

COMMAND OF LANGUAGE

This profile requires candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the different grammatical structures and their appropriate usage. Under this section the following attributes are considered.

(e) Capitalization and Punctuation

Most of the candidates are doing well in capitalization and punctuation. However, they still have a shortfall of not punctuating the demonstrative. They also continue to use commas even where they are not supposed to pause some did not use a comma at all where they were supposed to use it.

(f) Descriptive vocabulary

This requires candidates to use descriptive vocabulary thus words and phrases or both as a way of enhancing the essay. These should be outstanding words/phrases that give vivid picture of what has been described. These should create a picture in the mind of the reader as if the reader can see what has been described.

Examples

Motshameko wa kgwele ya dinao o ratiwa ke matshwititshwiti a batho.

Nna ke tsaya karolo mo metshamekong e le mebedi fela e ke leng mmantswitswidi mo go yone.

Examples of language aspects that can be used as descriptive vocabulary.

Language aspects	Example
Collective nouns	Matlakana a bana Boidiidi jwa batho Maphatšhaphatšha a metsi.
Ideophones (maetsisi)	Palakata! Tu! Thu! Pote! Thi! Phatsi!
Assonance(poeletso medumo)	Matsetseleko, magasisigasi, tshetlhatshetlha

(g)Figurative language

Candidates are required to use figurative language appropriately to produce an outstanding piece of writing. This involves the appropriate use of proverbs, idioms, and poetic aspects such as simile, personification and metaphor.

Observations

A lot of candidates did not use figurative language and this year it was worse. A few who tried to use proverbs and idioms made errors of inappropriate usage.

NB: Teachers should infuse encourage figurative language in their lesson plans and teach it in a context, this will help learners to grasp them and use them appropriately in essay writing.

(h)Compound and complex sentences

As in the previous years candidates still have difficulty in using both compound and complex sentences in their writing.

Observations

- Some candidates write short simple sentences.

- Some use more than one conjunctive in a long sentence.
- Some use both conjunctive and a comma when attempting to construct a compound sentence.
- Some candidates tend to write run-on sentences which oblige them to use more than one conjunctive in a sentence.

➤ **CONTENT MANAGEMENT**

This aim of this section is to establish whether candidates have attained the skills of taking all the different aspects of composition writing and merging them to produce a congruent piece of writing. This focuses on the following.

(i) Coherence of ideas within the paragraphs

It is very imperative to note that paragraphs should be constructed through adherence to the format. The expectation each paragraph should discuss one idea that has been mentioned thus it should have topic sentence and supporting ideas. The supporting sentence should not be divorced from the topic sentence.

Paragraph = Topic sentence + supporting sentences

Motshameka wa kgwele ya dinao o mosola fela thata mo go nna. O thusitse go ikgapha mo dilong tse di bosula jaaka go dirisa ditagi. Bangwe ba balekane ba me ba ke tsenang sekolo le bone ba tlhokela bagolo botho ka lebaka la ditagi. Ka jalo, motshameko o, a nthusitse gore ke bo ke se mo ditaging.

Topic sentence = Motshameko wa kgwele ya dinao o mosola fela thata mo go nna.

Supporting sentences = -Go ikgapha mo dilong tse di bosula

-Balekane ba me ba tlhokela bagolo botho ka lebaka la ditagi

Observations

Problems relating to paragraphing are still there and they seem to have increased this year. More candidates struggled to construct paragraphs. They wrote paragraphs made of fragmented ideas that were not even linked. Run-on sentences appear to dominate most candidates' work.

(j)Introduction and conclusion

The introduction should be the first paragraph of the essay which sets the scene, and it should be more than one sentence and the conclusion also should be more than one sentence. The conclusion should be a summary or a reflection on certain aspects of the essay.

Observations

Generally, most of the candidates did well in the introduction. However, some candidates wrote run on sentences as the introduction. Some candidates wrote statements which were not relevant to the topic.

Most of the learners did well in conclusion, however some had slips of bringing in new information in the conclusion which was not relevant to the topic.

NB:

During instructional delivery, emphasis should be made relating to the fact that an introduction should be a paragraph made up of more than one coherent sentence.

LETTER WRITING

Candidates were expected to write a letter to the Director in the Ministry of Education to express challenges resulting from undertaking a long trip to school. Unlike the previous year where they were tasked on the informal letter, this was year they had to write a formal letter. This was not supposed to pose a problem because the syllabus covers formal letters and candidates have been assessed on it in the previous years. Furthermore, the topic was appropriate to their level and easy for them to comprehend it because candidates are familiar with the school, and they take trips to their schools hence writing about the effects resulting from walking long distances to school and the solutions was not supposed to pose a problem. The format was also challenge to some candidates Below are some of the problems that need to be dealt with.

1.CONTENT MANAGEMENT

(a)Address and date

Candidates were expected to write a well formatted address and date. The date must be in Setswana.

Observations:

Most candidates were able to write a well-formatted address and the date. However, there were candidates who did not get a mark for this criterion because of the errors that the committed ranging from punctuating their addresses, failure to use title cases and failure to include the Department in the recipient's address. The following are examples of incorrectly formatted addresses from candidates' responses:

Mookamedi wa Lephata la Thuto	Mookamedi
P O Box 4	Lephata la thuto
Gaborone	P o Box 4
	Gaborone

Mookamedi
Lephata la Thuto
Gaborone
P O Box 4

(b)Opening and closing salutations:

The opening salutations was supposed to be: Rra/Mma and a line was supposed to be skipped after the recipient's address.

Opening salutation

Candidates got the opening salutation right however there were some candidates who did not get it correct, because they wrote it as follow:

- a) Rra/Mma b) Mma/Rra

Closing salutation

The closing salutation was "**Ka boikokobetso**" The candidates were expected to write it as follows:

Ka boikokobetso

Lesego Tumediso

Errors that surfaced from candidates was as follows:

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| i) Ke le | ii) Ka boikokobetso | iii) Ka boikokobetso |
| Lesego Tumediso | Lesego | Lesego Tumediso |

- i) Ka boikokobetso
- LESEGO TUMEDISO

➤ Some punctuated salutation with full stops

NB: Address and salutations are straight forward criterions which learners cannot miss it is worrisome as some candidates did not do the correct format, hence losing a mark.

2.COMMUNICATION

Under this profile candidates are expected to demonstrate an understanding of the topic. They are expected to address the topic in a straightforward and communicative manner which does not call for assumptions or speculations.

(c)mentioning the location of the school.

Candidates were expected to give clear evidence of where their school is located.

Observations

Most candidates clearly mentioned the location of the school and they managed to get a mark.

(d)Explaining the challenges resulting from undertaking a long trip to school.

Candidates were expected to provide information on the challenges resulting from undertaking the long trip and further give a full explanation of the challenges. Even if they stated several challenges at least one was to be fully elaborated using relevant ideas or examples.

EXAMPLES 1: explaining main idea with ideas/supporting points:

Mathata a a bakiwang ke go tsamaya mosepele o moleele go ya ko sekolong le go tsena thari. Se se dira gore re felele re siiwa ke dithutô tse di rutwang mo mosong. Go siiwa ke dithutô mo go bo go baka gore re se ka ra dira sentlê mo ditlhatlhobong.

Ntlha ya botlhokwa:

Mathata a a bakiwang ke go tsamaya mosepele o moleele go ya sekolong ke go tsena thari

Katoloso ka mogopolo:

Se,se dira gore re felele re siiwa ke dithutô tse di rutwang mo mosong. Go siiwa ke dithutô mo,go baka gore re se ka ra dira sentlê mo ditlhatlhobong.

EXAMPLE 2: explaining main idea with examples

Mathata a a bakiwang ke mosepele o moleele go ya sekolong ka gore re tsena kwa sekolong re lapile. Go lapa mo go baka mathata a farologanyeng jaaka go robala mo ntlwaneng ya borutêlô le le go tihôka go reetsa fa morutabana a tsweletse a ruta

Observations:

As in composition writing, even here candidates had shortfalls. They were able to come up with challenges of undertaking the long trip but were unable to elaborate them.

(e)State ways of rectifying their problem/ give solutions to the challenges:

Candidates were to state solutions to the challenges they encountered.

Observations:

Most candidates were able to come up with a solution related to the problems they mentioned in the previous paragraphs however, some came up with statements they perceived as a

solution,yet they were not related to the problems they had previously elaborated. There were a few who could not come up with solution just leaving the proble

COMMAND OF LANGUAGE

The candidates were expected to display knowledge of the different aspects of language such as tense, correct register, correct spelling appropriate orthography and variation of sentence openings.

f) Tense

There has been a significant improvement in the use of correct tense.The expectation was that candidate should be consistent in the use of tense and they should use correct tense agreeing with the topic. Almost all candidates used the correct tense although there were some who used future tense.

g) Register:

On the aspect of register candidates are expected to use appropriate diction for the task and it involves the use of Setswana throughout even in writing the names of subjects. The use of vulgar language is unacceptable.

Observations

There were candidates who lost a mark on register because of combining used Setswana and English as exemplified below:

Ke nna kwa sekolong se sebotlana sa Tshwane Primary School.

The error here is the use of sekolo and school, sebotlana and primary in the same sentence.

The correct way of writing should be:

Ke tsena kwa sekolong se sebotlana sa Tshwane

Ke tsena kwa Tshwane Primary School

(h) Spelling

A lot of candidates still lose marks because of wrongly spelt words. There is a need to advise them to proof-read their work after writing to check for spelling mistakes. Some of the errors indicated that candidate did not go over the work.

(i) Orthography

Most candidates still have a problem of not knowing which words are written conjunctively and which ones are written disjunctively. There is a need for consideration of the utterance/pronunciation to establish how the word should be written. Particular attention should be devoted to the use of sounds: flh/g, tlh,th/tlh. Major emphasis should be on teaching the candidates the correct orthography as it has been evident that regional dialectal differences have been an influence in the way candidates use vocabulary.

(j) Sentence opening

There has been a significant improvement in the verification of sentence openings. Candidates need to continue to be exposed to various sentence openings to eliminate monotony in their writing.

CONCLUSION

Centers are encouraged to take note of the comments on the different aspects stipulated in the report especially areas such as creativity and elaboration of guidelines which are critical in

portraying the uniqueness of the communication skills of a candidate. They are also to revisit the format of formal letter and salutation because some candidates lost marks in these simple and straightforward areas. Hopefully, effective utilization of the comments is likely to yield positive outcome on teaching and learning process.