Commentary on candidate evidence

Candidate 1

Portfolio–writing: I hate school

The candidate was awarded **8 marks** for this broadly creative piece of writing.

Summary

This is a personal piece in which the candidate explores experiences at high school.

Content

Attention to purpose is reasonably well sustained, covering thoughts and descriptions of a range of school experiences. For the first part of the piece, the candidate sticks fairly closely to the focus of the title ('I hate school'), for example: 'knowing that made me worried,' 'I wouldn't know how to act,' 'I didn't know any other students' (paragraph 1), 'made me feel vulnerable' (paragraph 2), 'my teacher in first year was very moody' (paragraph 4), etc. But, later in the piece the candidate widens out the content to include different aspects of school experience, such as reactions to different school subjects, prelims, etc, reflecting that 'I'm still not a fan of it, but I don't really mind doing it now because I need it for my qualifications so I can get a job' (paragraph 6).

Feelings/reactions/experiences are explored with only a sense of involvement (characteristic of the 9-7 mark range) and are not developed enough to reach the levels of involvement or sensitivity required for the 12-10 mark range. Examples of this include: 'it was very annoying' (paragraph 4), 'I'm still not a fan of it,' (paragraph 6), 'I didn't really revise much' (paragraph 8).
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Style

Features of personal writing are deployed with a degree of success, mostly in instances of reflective writing, for example: 'This makes me feel annoyed at myself for not doing as much work as I could've' (paragraph 8), 'This helped me learn that I need to focus and pay more attention' (paragraph 5). However, much of the writing does not go beyond the factual or simply informative, eg 'Block A was Maths,' 'In first year I was very small' (paragraph 2), 'The school is big now' (paragraph 7).

In terms of the purpose of the pieces of writing, language is effective in the main, but does not show signs of being carefully chosen to create effects, and could not be described as apposite, eg 'he was funny and nice' (paragraph 3), and 'it got boring very quick' (paragraph 5).

The structure of the piece is appropriate to the purpose and the division of related content into appropriate paragraphs results in meaning being communicated effectively.

The piece is satisfactory in terms of technical accuracy: paragraphing, sentence construction, spelling and punctuation are sufficiently accurate for meaning to be clear at first reading.

Overall

All indicators point to the 9-7 mark range. There is nothing to suggest the 6-4 range, and equally there are no real suggestions of 12-10. When a piece is exactly described by the statements from one mark range it should be awarded the mid-range mark. Therefore, this piece was given **8 marks**.

Candidate 2

Portfolio–writing: Why You Should Adopt from Animal Shelters

The candidate was awarded **11 marks** for this broadly discursive piece of writing.

Summary

This is a broadly discursive piece in which the candidate sets out to persuade readers that they should adopt animals from animal shelters.

Content

In this piece the attention to purpose is consistent in the main. In paragraph 1 the candidate begins by presenting, in summary form and with some persuasive force, the central arguments that are then developed in the paragraphs that follow, for example: 'Save an animal's life today and adopt from a shelter!'

Attention to purpose is maintained in paragraph 2 with the emotive point that animals 'will eventually be put down' if not adopted. This is supported by relevant research from Peta.org.uk.

In paragraph 3, the candidate presents the argument that 'adopting an animal creates more room for other animals that need homes.' Again, relevant research is cited, this time from the Humane Society. There is a good degree of persuasive force in the candidate's comment which follows a quotation from a Humane Society article:

'This clearly conveys that by adopting a shelter animal you aren't just saving one life, you're saving multiple lives because each animal that leaves a shelter creates a space for another animal that desperately needs it.'

In paragraph 4, the candidate acknowledges the disadvantages of rehousing maltreated animals ('Some animals that have come from abusive, neglectful homes may require extra care and find certain living arrangements a little more difficult'), but goes on to counter this argument by offering the opinion that 'there are several other breeds waiting to be adopted that could still benefit you in so many ways and give you just as much love as another animal could.'

Paragraph 5 highlights the economic case for adopting animals:

'Lastly, despite the previous setbacks, the overall cost of adopting an animal from a shelter is much cheaper than buying one!'

This idea is then developed and expanded in a way that is relevant to the candidate's line of thought:

'most shelter animals have already been neutered, sprayed and vaccinated which decreases the cost of owning a pet even further.'

In the final paragraph, the candidate re-states the main points of the argument, again with a good degree of persuasive force, urging the reader to be 'a hero,' and to 'Save a life.'

Style

The structure adopted by the candidate supports the purpose and meaning, as the candidate presents arguments in a logical sequence using connectives such as 'First and foremost,' (paragraph 2), 'Furthermore,' (paragraph 3), 'Despite,' (paragraph 4), 'Lastly,' (paragraph 5), 'In conclusion' (paragraph 6).

Features of the genre are deployed mostly successfully. For example, the candidate makes use of the second person to appeal directly to the reader: 'You could be that one household they need!' (paragraph 1), and 'you aren't just saving one life, you're saving multiple lives' (paragraph 3). Rhetorical questions are used to challenge the reader's views: 'So do you really want an innocent animal's life to be lost?' (paragraph 2), and 'Why wouldn't you give an animal a second chance to start over?' (paragraph 6). Similarly, the candidate makes use of commands, for example 'Picture this.' 'Save an animal's life,' 'Imagine the look of gratitude,' 'Save an animal's life today and adopt from a shelter!' (paragraph 1).

Language is appropriate to the purpose and is used at times to create an effect. For example, the candidate tries to elicit sympathy from the reader when animals are described as having been 'neglected, abused or abandoned' (paragraph 3). A more measured, neutral tone is created when the candidate is explaining the practicalities of pet ownership: 'Some animals also require specific living conditions or environments…' (paragraph 4).

Overall

The candidate's attention to purpose is consistent in the main. The candidate essentially makes two main points: a plea to save an animal's life, and a statement of the (mainly financial) benefits of adopting from animal shelters. There is evidence of relevant research which is used to strengthen the candidate's argument. The language features of the genre are used mostly successfully and the language is apposite. This piece of writing is described exactly by the statements from the 12-10 mark range. It was therefore given **11 marks**.

Candidate 3

Portfolio–writing: Tea for Two

The candidate was awarded **14 marks** for this broadly creative piece of writing.

Summary

In this creative piece the candidate adopts the persona of an imaginary friend − Pip − to a young Amelia. The piece is written from the perspective of Pip as he reflects on his past close relationship with Amelia during her childhood and mourns the imminent loss of Amelia outgrowing him.

Content

The piece displays very good creativity. The feelings of the character of Pip are expressed with a very good degree of insight and sensitivity, for example 'my internal fire dies without the oxygen of her laughter' (paragraph 13), and 'Of course I've felt the bond between us start to weaken like the echo of a nursery rhyme' (paragraph 11).

Furthermore, the candidate shows some skill in only gradually revealing to the reader that Pip exists solely in Amelia's imagination through a narrative which looks back on the rise and fall of their relationship.

There is, however, a slightly jarring note when the imaginary Pip seems able to pick up a toy teapot and hand it to Amelia: 'I handed it to her in the hope of stirring her memories' (paragraph 12).

The pieces ends though, with Amelia's poignant farewell to Pip which conveys her gratitude to him: '"Wait" she whispers…" Thank you."' (paragraph 14) There is clear sensitivity here.

Style

The piece is stylish, with language often used to create particular effects. The images of the 'tarmac sharks' in the playground (paragraph 4), and 'the butterflies from her tummy' and how 'we were swooping to catch them with nets' (paragraph 5) illustrate his joy in the relationship with Amelia. Later, as the relationship weakens, the sentence 'I don't know what's coming and I have no hand to hold.' (paragraph 13) is effective in conveying Pip's sadness.

However, there is the occasional moment when language features are deployed a little less successfully, for example the images of the 'bloodthirsty gump' and the 'innocent rabbit' (paragraph 8) are less considered and well realised.

Overall

This piece sits comfortably in the middle of the 13-15 range. It consistently displays very good creativity, language is used to create particular effects, and the structure is used to enhance the meaning (in the sense of the narrative arc

employed). There are, however, some aspects of the language choice which are a little less successful and these are enough to keep the piece in the middle of the mark range, slightly below the top mark.