

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE

English Language B

Paper 1

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Extracts Booklet

Paper Reference

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Text One

Summerhill School



Today, all over the world, education is moving towards more and more testing, more examinations and more qualifications. It seems to be a modern trend that assessment and qualifications define education. Today many experts in education and families are becoming uneasy with this restrictive environment. They are beginning to look for alternative answers to traditional schooling. One of these answers is democratic or 'free' schooling. There are many models of democratic schools in all corners of the globe, from Israel to Japan, from New Zealand and Thailand to the United States.

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The oldest and most famous of these schools is Summerhill, on the east coast of England. It was founded in 1921 by A. S. Neill. Summerhill School is one of the most famous schools in the world, and has influenced educational practice in many schools and universities. The democratic schools movement is now blossoming internationally, with many schools far and wide being based upon the philosophy of A. S. Neill, the founder of the school, or inspired by reading his books.

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Summerhill is a community of over a hundred people. About 95 of these are children aged between 5 and 18. The rest are teachers, house parents and other staff. It is situated in a large, much-loved Victorian house and grounds, two miles from the east coast of Suffolk. Most of the children live in the school during the term-time, though there are day pupils as well. Usually as the younger ones grow older, they prefer to sleep at school! Summerhill is a school for both boys and girls and is an international community. Many nations are represented including France, Germany, Holland, Israel, Switzerland, US, Korea and Taiwan; the UK accounts for less than half of the pupils.

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The school is set in twelve acres of garden and woodland with plenty of space for cycling, hut building, tree climbing, bonfires, camping and imaginative games. There is a swimming pool for use in the summer time, a tennis court, playing field, basketball area as well as table tennis indoors.

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There is a wide choice of subjects, up to and above GCSE level. A new timetable is created each term when the older children have "signed-up" for classes, though there is no compulsion to attend. As well as the structured timetable, there is free access to art, woodwork and computers. There are also open areas where kids not in classes can hang out, amuse themselves, socialise, play games, be creative.

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The important freedom at Summerhill is the right to play. All lessons are optional. There is no pressure to conform to adult ideas of growing up, though the community itself has an expectation of reasonable conduct from individuals. Bullying, vandalism or other anti-social behaviour is dealt with in two ways. Either the issue is discussed by the whole community in its daily meetings or it is dealt with by a specially elected ombudsman who investigates and tries to solve complaints and problems.

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Summerhill is a happy and caring community that recognises the importance of expressing emotions and learning through feelings. There is a general openness and honesty among the community members. Staff do not use adult authority to impose values and solve problems; these are solved by the individual with the help of friends, ombudsmen or by the community in meetings.

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The community atmosphere at the school is very strong. At Summerhill all are considered to be equal members of the community. All are equally entitled to citizenship of the school – teachers, big kids and little kids alike - and this is reflected in their interactions with each other. There is an ease of manner between equals that cannot exist in a hierarchy, however friendly and informal. Everyone knows, for instance, that a teacher bringing a case against a pupil is neither more nor less likely to succeed just because of the relative status of the people involved. Here, everyone has the same status.

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Of course, everything in the garden is not always rosy. Sometimes a pupil with an urge for rebellion – usually a newcomer – will behave in as destructive a way as possible, deliberately breaking as many of the community's written and unwritten laws as he or she is able and generally wreaking havoc. Obviously, they can be disruptive, but they usually settle down and begin to enjoy the freedom of Summerhill in a more constructive way.

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Text Two

World class: a superschool for the global age.



Lessons conducted in Mandarin and Spanish, iPads instead of exercise books... *Avenues* is revolutionising education

Inside the glass-roofed central courtyard of a lavishly converted warehouse in Manhattan, a group of American five-year-olds is singing a nursery rhyme – in Mandarin Chinese. Through the 10 foot glass wall behind them, a shaft of winter sunlight descends like a heavenly staircase, completing this blissful scene.

Welcome to *Avenues*, a state-of-the-art ‘world school’ and ‘integrated learning community’ in which half of all subjects are taught in either Mandarin or Spanish, every pupil is armed with an iPad from the age of seven – and, if necessary, you can attend class virtually, from the comfort of your sickbed.

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The aim is for all pupils to be trilingual (fluent in three languages) by the time they leave school, so they will spend periods of six to eight weeks studying at schools around the world as part of the curriculum. But *Avenues* doesn’t see itself as an international school. In New York, for example, 80 per cent of the parents are wealthy locals, able to afford the school’s fees.

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The first thing that hits you about *Avenues* is the light. All 215,000 square feet of this high-ceilinged, 10-floor, former grocery warehouse, built in 1928, are bathed in light. The second is the atmosphere of calm. It’s morning break time yet despite the presence of 1,600 students aged 3–12 (it will go up to 18 once the building is finished), the unruly uproar one might expect to hear echoing through the hallways is absent. Outside one kindergarten classroom, two little girls are engrossed in sticking pasta to paper plates, while a class of 10-year-olds are filing demurely up a nearby stairway.

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There is an emphasis on core academic skills and the teaching of 'strategic languages' i.e. languages of significant international importance such as Chinese and Spanish, rather than Latin and Greek. 'Character schooling' – the instilling of moral and ethical values such as 'don't lie', 'don't cheat', 'don't steal' and 'don't be afraid' are integral to the curriculum. 25

There are many heart-warming aspects of *Avenues*. The oval classroom tables, set in a semi-circle, ensure that there is no such thing as a back row. The communal 'play areas' on every floor encourage children to use the school as a giant field trip and there are spectacular rooftop playgrounds with views over the Hudson river and of the Empire State Building. There is a cafe in the lobby, which parents can use 'as their own personal Starbucks within the school and hang out there as long as they want'. These aspects are balanced by the school's fiercely innovative technology. 30

Avenues has been billed as 'the most technologically sophisticated school in the country' by the Wall Street Journal, with good reason. Pens, paper and books are all but extinct within the school's confines. Chris Whittle, the founder of the school, assures me that the younger pupils are taught handwriting and Chinese calligraphy, but I didn't see a child with a pencil at any point during my visit. 'We're trying to turn *Avenues* into a paperless place,' Whittle concedes. 'We see the iPad as being a pupil's book bag, so 90 per cent of our texts are on there.' 35

Technology is introduced gently to the younger pupils. 'We believe that it allows the kids to be a lot more independent about their learning.' It's true that on every floor boys and girls can be seen sitting quietly working away on their laptops in the communal 'independent workstations', looking more like college undergraduates than schoolchildren. 40

The reaction from parents has been remarkable. One mother, Rebecca Matchett, tells me that she feels 'lucky to be a part of such an innovative, dynamic academic environment. *Avenues* is preparing my child for the 21st century. I liked the fact that although the children were being taught largely in a foreign language using technology, there was still a teacher at the front leading the class. Even though the teachers are in charge, it feels like they are giving the children more of a voice, recognising them as individuals and respecting their different skills – so it's a great mix of old and new.' 45 50

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