



WESTMINSTER
SCHOOL

The Challenge
Core Paper

LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGE

Syllabus and Guidance
First Examination 2027

Introduction

The Linguistics and Language Challenge Paper is for candidates who have no instruction in either French or Latin.

The paper is designed to assess:

- curiosity about language and communication;
- precision and clarity of thought;
- analytical and problem-solving skills;
- creativity and flexibility in written expression;
- awareness of how language operates structurally and stylistically.

The paper does not require, nor expect any prior knowledge of formal linguistics. Instead, it rewards close observation, logical reasoning and the ability to think carefully about meaning, structure and style.

Candidates are encouraged to approach the paper as an exploration of language as both a system and a creative tool.

Structure of the paper

Section	Marks	Suggested Timings
Language Analysis	14	10 minutes
Guided Writing	20	20 minutes
The Editor's Desk	16	15 minutes
How Language Works	20	15 minutes
TOTAL	70	1 hour

Section A: Language Analysis

Candidates analyse sentences that may be interpreted in more than one way and explain the possible meanings.

This section assesses:

- close reading and attention to detail;
- ability to identify ambiguity in language;
- logical reasoning and explanation;
- awareness of sentence structure and meaning;
- ability to rewrite language clearly and precisely.

Candidates may also be asked to construct their own ambiguous sentence and explain its possible meanings.

The exercise is intended to reward careful thinking about how small changes in structure or wording can affect meaning.

Section B: Guided Writing

Candidates write a short piece of creative writing in English using a series of prescribed prompts.

This task assesses:

- creativity and imagination;
- clarity and organisation of ideas;
- control of sentence structure and punctuation;
- flexibility in vocabulary and expression;
- ability to incorporate specific words naturally within a coherent piece of writing.

Candidates are encouraged to:

- vary sentence length and structure;
- develop atmosphere and narrative voice;
- organise ideas logically;
- use language precisely and effectively.

The exercise is designed to reward originality and linguistic control rather than extensive preparation or memorised techniques.

Section C: The Editor's Desk

Candidates are required to improve and manipulate sentences to make them clearer, more accurate or more effective.

This section assesses:

- understanding of sentence structure;
- awareness of ambiguity and clarity;
- ability to improve style and register;
- punctuation and grammatical accuracy;
- concise and effective expression.

Tasks may include:

- rewriting awkward or unclear sentences;
- combining ideas effectively;
- improving formality or tone;
- reducing unnecessary repetition;
- rewriting language for greater dramatic effect.

The section rewards candidates who can think flexibly and critically about how language may be improved for different audiences and purposes.

Section D: How Language Works

Candidates read a short passage and answer questions exploring how language creates meaning, tone and effect.

This section assesses:

- grammatical awareness in context;
- understanding of vocabulary and tone;
- ability to identify language features;
- sensitivity to style;
- ability to explain how linguistic choices affect meaning.

Questions may require candidates to:

- identify parts of speech using examples provided;
- explain the effect of particular words or phrases;
- comment on tone;
- rewrite or improve short extracts;
- explain why certain language elements are more effective than others.

No specialist linguistic terminology is required beyond the examples supplied in the paper itself.

Preparation guidance

Candidates preparing for the paper are encouraged to:

- read widely and attentively;
- think carefully about how meaning can change through sentence structure or punctuation;
- practise concise and accurate writing;
- experiment with creative and descriptive language;
- discuss ambiguity, humour and tone in everyday language;
- develop confidence in editing and improving written English.

Overall, the Linguistics and Language Challenge paper is intended to reward intellectual curiosity, flexibility and precision, rather than technical linguistic knowledge.