**Birmingham City University**

**English Proficiency Test**

**Reading 2**

* **Do not open this booklet before the examiner tells you to.**
* **Read the instructions carefully.**
* **Total time available: 60 minutes. No extra time is available for transferring answers to the answer sheet.**
* **Write in pen or pencil.**

**Name: …………………………………………………………………………..**

**Band score:**

**ID Number: …………………………………………………………………………..**

**Test Centre: ….……………………………………………………………………….**

**Date: …………………………………………………………………………..**



Birmingham City University

International Centre for English

**Reading Passage 1**

*You should spend about* ***20 minutes*** *on questions* ***1 – 13****, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below.*

**The rise of home education in the UK**

Eight years ago, Marta Drew decided to take her children out of school and teach them herself at home. While it has not been easy, she always knew it was the right decision, she says. Her son Christopher, then 7 years old, had started to complain about school, saying that learning was boring. Marta began to research home schooling, and although her husband, Simon, did not initially like the idea, the more he read about it, the more he agreed it was a good alternative.

Christopher, now 15, and his sister, Alicja, 13, are still taught by their mother at their home near Reigate, Surrey. Marta, who had a part-time business making and selling jewellery, gave up work to focus entirely on her children’s education. Simon provides not only moral support but also works long hours as a graphic designer in London to ensure their financial stability. When she first started home educating, Marta carefully structured all of the children’s learning into a weekly timetable. Now they are older, she gives them more freedom to choose what to study and when, though they receive online tutoring at set times. They also participate in sports and cultural activities outside the home, along with other home-schooled children.

This may seem a unique way to approach learning, but the Drews represent a fast-growing trend towards home schooling in the UK. Nearly 37,000 primary and secondary-age children are estimated to be home-schooled across the whole of the UK. With a school age population of about 9.5 million, of course, this is a tiny proportion, accounting for only around 0.5%. It does appear, though, that home education numbers are rising, with the BBC last year reporting a 65% increase in England and Wales between 2008 and 2015.

Some people suggest that these statistics highlight the weaknesses in Government education policies, though home education experts all give varied reasons for this movement. Eleanor Reardon, a lawyer, established an advice service for home educators three years ago. She gives examples of the legal issues facing parents who choose to home school. One father had a daughter who required specialist medical care, so he chose to teach her himself. Another parent decided to teach their three young children at home because the nearest school was ten miles away. In both cases, the schools felt the parents were neglecting their children’s education. Reardon says she first realised there was a need for a home-schooling legal advice service following a Government review of home education in 2009. The report highlighted to parents alternative methods of education and resulted in a sudden increase in the number of children being home schooled.

With increased testing in schools, many parents are rejecting the pressure that they feel their children are being put under, and this was one of the main reasons parents gave in the BBC survey for choosing to home educate. Arun Gill, a former science teacher, was one such parent and decided to leave the school in which he worked to teach his children. His children subsequently felt less stressed and enjoyed studying more. From his experience in teaching, Gill reflects that the way students are assessed does not suit everyone. He explains that some children who could not write well failed exams as a result, despite being able to show their abilities in other ways.

One of the UK’s top experts on alternative education and a lecturer at Newman University in Birmingham, Helen Lees, feels the problem is not just lack of academic achievement. She argues that children, especially young children who are just starting school, learn mostly through play. For that reason, England’s education system is largely inappropriate, because it fails to meet children’s physical, emotional and social needs. When Lees visited a class of 4 and 5 year-olds in a local school recently, the teacher described how “It’s quite formal. They sit down and do maths and English all morning, every day.” When Lees asked whether children enjoyed this style of learning, the teacher only replied, “Our results are excellent.” Lees concludes that, although some teachers appear to be very happy with the system, in truth, many people do not want this for their children.

On the other hand, becoming a home educator is not always the parents’ choice, according to Vic McAndrew, a former attendance officer at a school. He revealed that one school he worked at demanded that the parents of several children take them out of school due to bad behaviour and teach them at home. The school, however, denied this when one of the parents complained to the local council, claiming it had only suggested home schooling might be a better option for those children.

As Marta Drew admits, having a comfortable income and being prepared to make changes make home schooling an option only for a small minority of families. Despite this, with many parents wishing for greater influence over how and what their children learn, the trend seems likely to continue. For those who do choose to pursue this route, Drew is confident that the rewards are plenty. Of the effect it has had on her family, she says “We have grown closer, and the children have a hunger for learning. They are happy, enthusiastic children who love life.”

Source: Mansell, W. & Edwards, P. (2016) DIY schooling on the rise as more parents opt for home education. *The Guardian,* [online] 12 April. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/apr/12/home-schooling-parents-education-children-england> [Accessed 06.05.2016]

**Questions 1 – 5**

*Do the following statements agree with the information in Passage 1?*

*In boxes* ***1 – 5*** *on your answer sheet, write*

***TRUE/ T*** *if the statement agrees with the information*

***FALSE/ F*** *if the statement contradicts the information*

***NOT GIVEN/ NG*** *if there is no information on this*

**1** Marta Drew works part-time as well as teaching her children.

**Answer ……..**

**2** Christopher and Alicja are allowed to plan some of their own studying.

**Answer ……..**

**3** There are more children of primary school age than secondary school age being home-schooled in the UK**.**

**Answer ……..**

**4** Reardon provides legal support to schools.

**Answer ……..**

**5** The Government report claimed that home education was the best form of education.

**Answer ……..**

**Questions 6 – 9**

*Answer the questions below. Choose* ***NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS*** *from Passage 1 for each answer.*

**6** What do a lot of parents feel their children are experiencing too much of in school?

**Answer:**

**7** How do children learn best, according to Helen Lees?

**Answer:**

**8** Why did one school no longer want to teach some children, according to Vic McAndrew?

**Answer:**

**9** What do many parents want, regarding their children’s education?

**Answer:**

**Questions 10 – 13**

*Match each statement* ***10 – 13*** *with the correct person* ***A – F.*** *You will* ***NOT*** *need all of the letters.*

***The statements do not follow the order of the text.***

Which person

**10** thinks home education is only possible for a small number of families?

**Answer …….**

**11** feels that tests are not the best way to assess all students?

**Answer …….**

**12** believes that, in general, schools do not look after children’s needs?

**Answer …….**

**13** did not at first want their children to be educated at home?

**Answer …….**

**A Marta Drew**

**B Simon Drew**

**C Eleanor Reardon**

**D Arun Gill**

**E Helen Lees**

**F** **Vic McAndrew**

**Reading Passage 2**

*You should spend about* ***20 minutes*** *on questions* ***14 – 27****, which are based on Reading Passage 2 below.*

**Isambard Kingdom Brunel**

**A** Isambard Kingdom Brunel (9 April 1806 – 15 September 1859) is one of the most well-known people in Britain’s industrial history. Born in Portsmouth, to a French father and English mother, he was to become one of the most talented and innovative engineers in the world and was responsible for designing many now-famous bridges, tunnels, ships and railway lines throughout the UK.

**B** Brunel’s first major achievement was assisting his engineer father with the Thames Tunnel project, which involved constructing a tunnel under the River Thames in London to connect Wapping in the North with Rotherhithe in the South. This dangerous work resulted in the deaths of several workers and meant Brunel nearly lost his own life. Nevertheless, the tunnel was ultimately a success. While financial problems caused work on the tunnel to be stopped in 1828, construction eventually continued seven years later and it was completed in 1842. It was not opened to the public until 1843, however; 20 years after Marc Brunel first proposed his plan to build the tunnel.

**C** In 1831, Brunel won a competition to design a new bridge in Bristol. Though the bridge was not completed until 1864, after his death, Brunel declared it to be the proudest achievement of his career. Like the Thames Tunnel, the Clifton Suspension Bridge continues to be used today, and is Bristol’s most recognised landmark, with over 4 million vehicles using it to cross the River Avon annually, as well as many pedestrians. Such is the popularity of the bridge as an attraction, that in 2014, to coincide with the 150th anniversary of its construction, £2 million was spent on building a new visitor centre with improved facilities, in order to better cater to tourists.

**D** Brunel is perhaps best remembered for his work on one of the first main train lines in the UK. He gained the job of Chief Engineer for an ambitious project to build a railway linking London and Bristol. This would cut the journey time from two and a half days, by horse and coach, to just two and a half hours. This was during the early days of trains, and Brunel had to spend many hours and days examining the landscape and deciding upon the best route across the countryside between the two cities. Due to the land not being very flat, this was not easy. Fortunately, Brunel was a workaholic and he often survived on only a few hours’ sleep a night. Combined with this, his ability to think creatively enabled him to find solutions to such difficulties. Ultimately, the train line incorporated numerous tunnels through mountains and hills, and bridges to carry trains across valleys and rivers.

**E** Finally, in 1854, Paddington train station in London was opened and the completion of the railway link to Bristol was celebrated. This is not to say the project was without its weaknesses. Despite Brunel’s accomplishment, the railway was expensive and went over the estimated budget by a significant amount. Mistakes were also made during its construction which meant the tracks later had to be adapted so that they could be linked to other railway routes around the UK. This was done at great expense. Nonetheless, Brunel’s innovative approach and his attention to detail mean it was a success despite the complications and it is still in use today.

**F** Along with tunnels, bridges and railways, Brunel was also responsible for designing several famous ships. Even before the London-Bristol line had been finished, he began work on The Great Western, which was to transport goods and passengers to and from the USA across the Atlantic Ocean. When it was launched in 1838 on its first transatlantic voyage, it was the largest steamship in the world and was safer and faster than sailing ships, which had been used until then. After the success of his first steamboat, Brunel subsequently built another, The SS Great Britain, which would take passengers on the same route. It set sail in 1843 and was the first metal ship to be built in the world. The Great Eastern, Brunel’s next steamship, was to be even bigger than both earlier ships, and offer a more luxurious journey for passengers, although it was to travel between Britain and Australia, rather than the USA.

**G** Brunel’s ambition and enthusiasm also meant he accepted many projects that others in his profession did not want to manage because they believed them to be too complex. For instance, during Britain’s involvement in the Crimea War in the 1850s, Brunel developed a mobile hospital to be transported to the war zone. Renkioi Hospital, as it was named, received much praise from the nurses who worked in it due to its design, which helped to encourage cleanliness and therefore minimise the spread of disease.

**H** When Brunel died, he left an impressive legacy of engineering across Britain. Having played a key role in the early days of the industrial revolution, not only did he design every last detail of his projects, but he took an active part in the building and often helped operate them once completed. He remains an inspiration for modern engineers and the establishment of Brunel University London in 1966 means his legacy lives on.

Source: BBC History (2014) Isambard Kingdom Brunel (1806 - 1859). *BBC History,* [online] 2014. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/brunel_kingdom_isambard.shtml> [Accessed 05.07.2016]

Source: Pettinger, T. (2010) Biography Isambard Kingdom Brunel. *Biography Online,* [online] 28th May. Available at: <http://www.biographyonline.net/business/brunel.html> [Accessed 05.07.2016]

**Questions 14 – 20**

*Complete the table below. Choose* ***NO MORE THAN FOUR WORDS OR NUMBERS*** *from the text**for each answer.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Project** | **Information** |
| Thames Tunnel | * Brunel helped **(14)** ……………………………………   with its construction.   * Linked North and South London. * Was finished in **(15)** …………………………………. |
| Clifton Suspension Bridge | * Brunel felt it was his best work. * The city’s best-known **(16)** …………………………….. . * Built over **(17)** …………………………... . |
| Railway project | * Connected Bristol with London * **(18)** ………………………………………… was reduced to 2 ½ hours. * Designing it was very challenging for Brunel. |
| **(19)** ……………………………………..  and    **(20)** ………………………………………  (in either order) | * Steam-powered ships * Travelled between the UK and USA |

**Questions 21 – 27**

*Match each statement* ***21 – 27*** *with the correct project* ***A – G****.*

*You will* ***NOT*** *need all of the letters. You may need to use some letters more than once.*

***The statements do not follow the order of the text.***

**21** The cost of the project was higher than expected.

**Answer …….**

**22** Brunel felt he had achieved his best work.

**Answer …….**

**23** It was the biggest of the ships that Brunel built.

**Answer …….**

**24** Brunel came close to dying while working on the project.

**Answer …….**

**25** It was one of many projects that other engineers had rejected.

**Answer …….**

**26** Planning was difficult due to the uneven environment.

**Answer …….**

**27** It was not completed during Brunel’s lifetime.

**Answer …….**

**A Thames Tunnel**

**B Clifton Suspension Bridge**

**C London-Bristol railway**

**D The Great Western**

**E The SS Great Britain**

**F The Great Eastern**

**G** **Renkioi Hospital**

**Reading Passage 3**

*You should spend about* ***20 minutes*** *on questions* ***28 – 40****, which are based on Reading Passage 3 below.*

**Sustainability: benefits in business**

***Sustainability (noun)***

*The production of goods or services using methods which cause little or no damage to the environment.*

**A** Over the past 50 years, the world has experienced many changes due to population growth and rapid economic development. The combination of these two factors has led to increased demand for food, energy and the planet’s other natural resources. The effect this human activity has had on Earth is known as The Great Acceleration and it has had some unfortunate consequences, including a rise in harmful greenhouse gases and the loss of many types of wildlife.

**B** It is clear that if The Great Acceleration continues, humans, animals and plant life will all suffer. In order to address this problem, many communities have established organisations to reduce the impact of humans on the environment. These groups promote changes to lifestyles by encouraging people to use bicycles rather than cars and asking people to eat less meat, for instance. They do not, though, have the power or money to solve the problem by themselves. Until recently, many businesses were not concerned about their impact on the environment. They focused instead on growth and profit. However, more companies are beginning to introduce environmentally-friendly processes. One reason for this is that sustainability, which is better for the environment than traditional business practices, can also offer businesses many advantages.

**C** Firstly,sustainability can help businesses become more efficient. One of the cheapest changes to introduce, along with using LED lightbulbs, is changing computer settings. At the other end of the scale, investing in an energy audit is very costly, but an expert team will assess the company’s energy usage and recommend ways to save energy and costs. Energy-saving equipment is more affordable for most companies. While it is more expensive than other types of equipment, it can save money in the long term. Considering even bigger changes, Coca-Cola, Google and Nike are among the big brands to commit to only using renewable energy, such as wind and solar power. Meanwhile, the Swedish business IKEA has made an even more powerful promise to produce as much renewable energy as it consumes by 2020. The company has so far invested nearly $2 billion into its own energy-generating facilities and plans to spend more in this area to fully achieve its aim.

**D** Being more environmentally-friendly not only saves costs. Firms can also benefit if they advertise the fact that they are sustainable, as highlighted in a study of over 50,000 consumers in the US. Nearly 60% of customers were more likely to buy products and services from companies which they knew were concerned about the environment. Thus, increased sustainability can help companies to expand their customer base. Furthermore,it does not only appeal to customers.Potential employees are often more attracted to a company that considers the health of the environment important for a number of reasons. Most obviously, if a company cares about the environment, it will probably also care about its staff. In addition, working for a company which is more responsible than its competitors gives people a sense of pride. Finally, people want to work in organisations whose goals and policies reflect their own personal values.

**E** Lastly, a study by Deutsche Bank shows that companies which are recognised for their environmental policies constantly achieve high profits. This is closely associated with customer growth, but such high-performing companies also tend to be forward-thinking. Multinational businesses that have led the way in becoming sustainable, such as Unilever and Kingfisher, began to introduce such practices mainly for their own long-term interests. By staying ahead, firms are less likely to break environmental rules and regulations. Many companies are not aware of the latest laws relating to the environment since such legislation is frequently updated.

**F** It is not always easy for companies to introduce sustainable practices, but Polly Courtice, director of the Institute for Sustainability Leadership at Cambridge University, strongly believes that businesses must take on this responsibility for one important reason. She argues that they, rather than governments, have the power to make quick changes to protect the environment, which can take months or even years in the slow political system. Though many corporations are beginning to make changes, too many firms only care about short-term profit. In the end, the benefits certainly outweigh the disadvantages, with positive consequences for large and small businesses becoming more environmentally-friendly.

# Source: Anderson, R. (2016)Sustainability the Key to Long-term Corporate Health. *BBC News* [online] 6 April. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-35430228> [Accessed 08.04.2016]

Source: Rogers, M. (2016) 6 Benefits of Becoming a Sustainable Business. *Environmental Leader* [online] 29 March. Available at: <http://www.environmentalleader.com/2016/03/29/6-benefits-of-becoming-a-sustainable-business/> [Accessed 08.04.2016]

**Questions 28 – 32**

*Complete the notes below.*

*Choose* ***NO MORE THAN THREE WORDS*** *from the passage for each answer. Write your answers in boxes* ***28 – 32*** *on your answer sheet.*

The Great Acceleration

Population expansion and economic growth result in more **(28)** …………………………………….. for Earth’s supplies.

Negative effects:

* Increase in **(29)** ……………………………………
* Fewer animal and plant species

Who is trying to solve the problem?

* Local community groups – by persuading people to adapt their

**(30)** ……………………………………, such as changing how they travel and what they eat.

* **(31)** …………………………………… - by using methods which are environmentally- friendly.

Both the environment and businesses can benefit from **(32)** …………………………………….

**Questions 33 – 36**

*Choose the correct letter,* ***A****,* ***B****,* ***C*** *or* ***D.*** *Write the correct letter in boxes* ***33 – 36*** *on your answer sheet.*

**33** Which of the following costs the most?

**A** Investing in an energy audit

**B** Buying energy-saving electrical equipment

**C** Using LED lightbulbs

**D** Changing computer settings

**34** What does IKEA plan to do by 2020?

**A** Use only wind and solar power

**B** Create and use equal amounts of energy

**C** Spend $2 billion on saving energy

**D** Reduce the amount of energy it uses

**35** How can businesses increase their customer base?

**A** Sell a wider variety of products and services

**B** Expand into US markets

**C** Advertise to more people

**D** Promote their sustainability efforts

**36** How many reasons are given for people wanting to work for sustainable businesses?

**A** One

**B** Two

**C** Three

**D** Four

**Questions 37 – 40**

*Do the following statements agree with the information in passage 3?*

*In boxes* ***37 – 40*** *on your answer sheet, write*

***TRUE/ T*** *if the statement agrees with the information*

***FALSE/ F*** *if the statement contradicts the information*

***NOT GIVEN/ NG*** *if there is no information on this*

**37** Unilever and Kingfisher make the same types of products.

**Answer ……..**

**38** A lot of companies are familiar with the newest environmental laws.

**Answer ……..**

**39** Businesses should become sustainable in order to gain political power.

**Answer ……..**

**40** Sustainability offers mostly advantages to businesses.

**Answer ……..**

**THAT IS THE END OF THE TEST.**

**NOW TRANSFER YOUR ANSWERS TO THE ANSWER SHEET.**