**Section A**

**Question 1**

Issues with this question:

* Not focusing on the question: issues of children and starting school – some people didn’t write much about the age pupils start school
* Not working through the article to cover a full range of issues
* Missing the overall point of the article about children and starting school
* Not recognising that there are two sides of the argument

**1.** Overall, I understand from Source 1 that children in the UK are taught differently from others in Europe because of the age they start school.

The writer implies that this has negative effects on their education. In Finland, for example, children start three years later than the UK, at age seven, and Finland has ‘the best educational outcomes’ and ‘a high level of income equality’ that the writer suggests is as a result of this.

The problem is that learning ‘in an academic way’ at too early an age puts pressure on all types of children, surprisingly not just the ones who aren’t as bright. In fact, the writer suggests more able students to less well than we assume because their ‘natural curiosity about the world, and eagerness to learn about it, is stifled’, which is the opposite of what most people would think. The idea that ‘clever kids will always be spotted and always thrive’ is wrong and they often under-achieve for many reasons, all stemming from the pressure of starting school early and a ‘fear of failure’.

Issues that also arise from being ‘forced into formal schooling too early’ include children being labelled as having ‘learning difficulties’ when really their poor achievement is because of the ‘straitjacket that has been laced around them at too tender an age’. They don’t have special needs; they just aren’t motivated to do their best because they are put under pressure so early on.

The writer believes that the more beneficial side of the school experience (‘books and toys, other children to play with, adults who engage with you’) is lost when they are told to ‘sit down, be quiet, and concentrate on one thing’.

However, some children do enjoy a ‘highly standardised education’ and do well, but most do not. This is mostly boys, who have ‘had enough of education’ by the time they reach seven, which is when they’re just starting school in Finland!

Why would the response above achieve an A\*?

**Question 2**

Issues with this question:

* Writing more about the image than the headline – try to have a balance, or more about the headline (headline needs 2+ links to text)
* Not quoting from the text when linking
* Only linking without writing about specific effects of words/techniques in the headline
* Not describing the image in any depth

**2.** The headline is effective because ‘Island children’ tells us who the article is about and instantly intrigues the reader as it makes these children seem different from others. This sense of isolation is enhanced with the phrase ‘miles from everyone’ and readers wonder who could be that far away – the headline creates questions in the reader’s mind. These questions are answered in the article, as it is explained that ‘the school could hardly be more remote’ and that these children are at a school which ‘lies at the end of six miles of single-track road running through a beautiful, barren Western Isles landscape’.

The picture is an image of the ‘beautiful, barren’ landscape and its ‘remoteness’, where the sky, hills and water all add to the idea that these children are isolated, maybe even neglected and forgotten. Their clothes reinforce the idea that they are outdoors. However, this juxtaposes the foreground, where two children are transfixed by the laptop, which is unexpected in such an environment. This shows that because of Glow, ‘the world’s first national education intranet’, these pupils are no longer so isolated. Their facial expressions show that they are in a sense of wonder at the laptop, highlighting its success and allowing us to see why it might be earning ‘world-wide praise’ and the light shining on them (the ‘glow’) makes it almost look like a religious experience.

There is also a play on words using the name of the ‘Glow’ scheme in the headline, where it is used as a pun as part of the metaphor ‘bask in the glow’, which creates the sense of something mysterious. It has positive connotations of luck and sunshine, usually connected to an extraordinary and happy experience.

Why would the response above achieve an A\*?

**Question 3**

Issues with this question:

* Not relating to events/what’s happening in the text to help explain why characters are thinking/feeling a certain why – a lot of vague comments like ‘she liked it…’ , ‘the people’ and ‘the place’, instead of explaining *what*  she liked, *who* the people are, and *what* the place is (and why these things are relevant)
* Not very much on how thoughts or feelings change throughout the text

**3.** Jane’s thoughts and feelings on her bike ride home are generally related to her starting at a new school, which has made her feel confident and more grown up.

We can see her confidence from the way she feels competitive, especially towards the Northgate boys, who she felt she had to overtake because ‘It was a race, though they didn’t know it.’ This made her feel ‘impressive’ and like people were noticing her. This was because of the ‘blue and screen scarf’ that she was so proud of, because it showed she was now a grammar school girl. She thought about having ‘homework to do’, which also made her feel impressive.

Passing the bakery made Jane think of the ‘warm yeast smell’ in the mornings, which reminded her of the ‘doughnuts and cream buns’ for break at school. That made her think about how much she liked the canteen and school dinners, but also about her being someone who has free school dinners. I can infer that Jane feels embarrassed about this, because ‘no one knew’ that she to put her name ‘in a separate book’. This seems to have made her feel a little separated from the other girls.

As the journey progressed, Jane’s confidence grew. She felt ‘unassailable’ overtaking chatting girls at speed, until she felt ‘hot’, but triumphant as she’d ‘beaten everyone’. This implies that she felt the need to constantly prove herself and be the best.

Towards the end of the text her thoughts and feelings show changes in Jane. She found it hard to believe that she once played in the shed – ‘the dark and musty space’. She rejected her past because she felt it was childish and beneath her. She also rejected her previous friends as she’d now grown up or possibly become better than them, now ‘I was a grammar school girl’.

Why would the response above achieve an A\*?

**Question 4**

Issues with this question:

* Analysing structure (e.g. sentence types, punctuation), which isn’t worth any marks
* This means you must analyse the effect of words – pick out key words, phrases, language techniques (AREDFOREST; figurative language – simile, metaphor, personification; etc.)
* Not very much on how thoughts or feelings change throughout the text
* Vague comments about language instead of specific effects, connotations, associations etc.
* Using ‘imagery’ as an easy explanation, without even explaining what kind of imagery it is and why, or basically saying that description creates imagery (stating the obvious!)
* Not saying how the language helps to meet the purposes of each text
* Misinterpreting the form/type/genre – text 3 isn’t always travel writing!

**4.** Source 1 is an informative newspaper article in which the writer has a clear viewpoint and uses emotive, factual and descriptive language to back up her point and persuade the readers. Source 3 is also descriptive; however, it is much more personal and this description is used to entertain the reader, and share feelings about the writer’s past, possibly appealing to readers of a similar age.

Early on in source 3, the writer creates a sense of speed by writing ‘Shops and houses flew by, blurring into one long shape at either side of my vision’. This effectively shows the speed because ‘blurring into one long shape’ creates imagery of all of the features around her blending together, while ‘at either side of my vision’ shows focus and determination. Jane is looking straight ahead because she wants to get home and win her race, so it indicates her strong-willed personality.

There are other vivid descriptions, like the school dinners: ‘jam sponge with coconut on it that came with a treacly fruity sauce and cheese pudding’. This evokes the reader’s senses, creating colour, texture and smell, particularly through the use of adjectives such as ‘treacly’ and ‘fruity’, which are child-like. This helps to create the feeling of a past age; it makes the reader think about how school is different these days. This is also done when the prefects are described as ‘grand’ to show how powerful they seemed to be, and ‘remote’ to create a sense of distance between them and the writer, as they were ‘raised on a dais’, creating imagery of almost god-like beings looking down on the younger pupils.

Vivid descriptions are also used in Source 1, such as when children are described as ‘stifled’. However, this time it is to convince the reader about the negative effects of starting school early in the UK, as it has connotations of being smothered, suffocated or even killed. This hyperbole might shock or panic the readers, especially parents, into agreeing with the writer’s view. The metaphor of the ‘straitjacket’ has a similar effect, creating worrying imagery of children being trapped; starting school early is made to seem almost evil, juxtaposed with the ‘natural curiosity’ of children that it removes.

To further persuade the reader, Source 1 uses factual language, including the different ages children start school. These words, such as ‘six and seven’, are placed in contrast to positive, success related words like the ‘high level’ and the superlative ‘best’, to support the writer’s point.

Whereas Source 1 maintains this serious tone throughout, Source 3 changes from quite light and positive at the start to negative and almost sinister at the end. Innocent and child-like language is used early on, such as ‘scooted’ in ‘scooted along on one pedal’, compared to the later description of the shed as a ‘dark and musty space’, which makes it seem almost like a prison without light. It suggests that the shed is something to be rejected with shame now that the writer has grown out of it. Phrases like ‘for months on end’ also reinforce the idea that parts of her childhood were like a prison sentence, before attending Northgate.

On the other hand, Source 1 uses lists to show that there are lots of reasons to support the writer’s views. An example of this is ‘…children often under-achieve for a variety of reasons, including:…’ This helps the writer to build her point, almost like she’s making a pitch to appeal to the reader, who will recognise what the writer is saying and see her as truthful and correct.