IGCSE English as a First Language – Exam-Style Reading Comprehension

STUDENT VERSION

Reading Passage

Empowering Homeschool Students to Create Change

When people imagine homeschoolers, they often picture quiet study rooms, flexible schedules, and personalised learning plans. What they rarely picture is a group of young people capable of influencing their communities. Yet across Hong Kong and beyond, homeschool students are proving that meaningful change does not require a classroom, a uniform, or a school bell. It requires curiosity, courage, and the belief that one's voice matters.

One of the greatest strengths of homeschooling is the freedom it gives students to explore real-world problems. Without the constraints of rigid timetables, many homeschoolers spend their mornings studying traditional subjects and their afternoons volunteering, researching social issues, or developing creative projects. A few years ago, a group of young homeschoolers—both Western families residing in Hong Kong and local Hong Kong students—initiated a project at Citygate Shopping Centre to learn how to correctly classify different types of rubbish under the guidance of the mall's management team. They worked closely with a professional waste-management company, gaining hands-on experience in how to preserve their city in a clean and responsible way. Through this project, the students not only improved their understanding of recycling but also demonstrated how young people can take meaningful action to protect their community.

Another inspiring example is Paris, a former homeschool student who was admitted to a local university at the age of fifteen through her homeschooling pathway. Now in her final year at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, she devotes her time and energy to building a supportive ecosystem for homeschooling in Hong Kong. By applying the AI knowledge she has gained from her studies, she works to create resources and opportunities for educationally marginalised students across the city. Her efforts reflect a strong sense of social responsibility and a deep commitment to community service, showing how homeschoolers can grow into leaders who uplift others.

In recent years, the rise of artificial intelligence has further strengthened independent learning for homeschool students. AI tools can explain difficult concepts in simple steps, provide instant feedback, and adapt to each learner's pace, allowing students to study more confidently and efficiently. These technologies also expose learners to a wider range of subjects and skills, from coding to creative writing, without needing specialised tutors. By making high-quality learning

support available anytime and anywhere, AI empowers homeschoolers to take greater ownership of their education and explore their interests more deeply—an essential foundation for becoming agents of change.

Technology more broadly also plays a significant role in empowering homeschoolers. With online platforms, students can connect with peers around the world, join virtual workshops, and collaborate on meaningful projects. These experiences broaden their perspectives and show them that change is not limited by geography. Dr Lai also creates many learning opportunities for Hong Kong homeschool students, such as Science Museum field trips, free online IGCSE Mathematics lessons, and other enrichment activities that support both their academic development and their opportunities for socialisation. These initiatives demonstrate how community support can amplify the impact of independent learners.

Ultimately, empowering homeschool students to create change is not about giving them special privileges. It is about recognising that young people, regardless of their educational setting, have the capacity to observe problems, imagine solutions, and take action. When adults trust them, guide them, and provide opportunities for meaningful engagement, homeschoolers can become powerful contributors to society.

The world does not need students who simply memorise facts. It needs young people who are willing to ask difficult questions, challenge assumptions, and work towards a better future. Homeschoolers, with their flexibility, creativity, and strong support networks, are uniquely positioned to do exactly that.

Section A: Questions

1. Using your own words, explain why homeschooling allows students to explore real-world problems more easily. (3 marks)

2. How does the writer show that homeschoolers can take meaningful action in their communities? Refer to two examples from the passage. (4 marks)

3. In the paragraph about the Citygate project, how does the writer present the students' learning experience? (6 marks)

4. What impression does the writer create of Paris? Support your answer with two details from the text. (4 marks)

5. Explain how the writer presents the role of technology and AI in empowering homeschool students. (5 marks)

6. How does the writer use language to persuade the reader that homeschoolers can create change? (6 marks)

Section B: Summary Question

7. Summarise the ways in which homeschool students are empowered to create change, according to the passage.
Write 80–100 words. (15 marks)

TEACHER VERSION

SECTION A – MARK SCHEME + MODEL ANSWERS

Q1 Mark Scheme (3 marks)

- - Quiet study environment
- - Flexible schedules
- - Personalised learning

Model Answer

People usually imagine homeschoolers studying quietly at home, following flexible routines, and learning through personalised plans rather than being active in the community.

Q2 Mark Scheme (4 marks)

- - Citygate project → environmental action
- - Paris → leadership and service
- - Technology → global collaboration

Model Answer

The writer shows this through the Citygate project, where students worked with professionals to improve recycling. Another example is Paris, who uses her AI knowledge to support marginalised students and strengthen the homeschooling community.

Q3 Mark Scheme (6 marks)

- Content:
- - Sorting rubbish
- - Guided by professionals
- - Hands-on environmental learning

- Effect:
- - Practical verbs
- - Positive tone
- - Real-world impact

Model Answer

The writer describes the students taking part in a practical recycling project, where they learned to sort rubbish correctly under expert guidance. They gained real-life environmental knowledge

by working directly with a waste-management company. The example is effective because it highlights hands-on learning, shows collaboration with adults, and demonstrates how young people can make a positive difference.

Q4 Mark Scheme (4 marks)

- - Entered university at 15
- - Uses AI to help others
- - Builds supportive ecosystem

Model Answer

Paris is shown as hardworking and socially responsible. She entered university at fifteen, and she now uses her AI skills to help marginalised students and support the homeschooling community.

Q5 Mark Scheme (5 marks)

- - AI gives personalised support
- - Instant feedback
- - Wider subject access
- - Global collaboration
- - Online opportunities

Model Answer

The writer explains that AI helps students by breaking down difficult ideas and giving instant feedback. Technology also connects them with global peers through online workshops and collaborative projects. These tools broaden their learning opportunities and help them study independently and confidently.

Q6 Mark Scheme (6 marks)

- - Vocabulary
- - Tone
- - Examples
- - Persuasive techniques

Model Answer

The writer uses inspiring vocabulary such as "curiosity" and "powerful contributors" to highlight potential. The tone is encouraging and confident, suggesting that young people can make a real difference. Real examples, like the Citygate project and Paris's achievements, strengthen the argument by showing genuine success stories.

SECTION B – SUMMARY MARK SCHEME + MODEL ANSWER

Content (10 marks)

- Flexibility
- Real-world projects

- Environmental action
- Leadership
- AI support
- Technology
- Community opportunities
- Independent learning
- Global connections
- Adult guidance

Quality of Writing (5 marks)

- Clarity
- Conciseness
- Coherence
- Own words
- Accuracy

Model Summary Answer (94 words)

Homeschoolers can become agents of change because their flexible schedules allow them to explore real-world issues beyond academic study. They gain practical experience through community projects, such as environmental work at Citygate, and are inspired by role models like Paris, who uses her university-level skills to support marginalised students. Strong technological support, including AI tools, helps them learn independently and develop confidence, while online platforms connect them to global collaboration. With supportive adults, meaningful opportunities, and the freedom to pursue their interests, homeschoolers are well-positioned to contribute positively to society.