Focus Inspection Report

on the Use of English as the Medium of Instruction at the Junior Secondary Level

Liu Po Shan Memorial College

Address of School: No. 22-66, Standard Secondary School
Wai Tsuen Road, Tsuen Wan, Kowloon

Inspection Period: 6, 7 & 9 March 2012

Quality Assurance Division
Education Bureau

April 2012
Focus Inspection Team

Team Leader
Mr CHENG Sze-chiu, Cirillo

Members
Ms CHUNG Siu-yee, Amy
Ms FUNG Suk-ching
Ms NG Wing-chee, Ita
Ms SUEN Siu-wai

Education Bureau
The Government of the Hong Kong
Special Administrative Region (2012)

Except for commercial purposes or use in connection with a prospectus or advertisement, this report may be reproduced in whole or in part, provided that the source is acknowledged.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Inspection Methodology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Planning, Implementation and Evaluation of the School-based Medium of Instruction Arrangements</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Learning and Teaching</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.1 Curriculum and Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Support Measures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3 Classroom Learning and Teaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Way Forward</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Inspection Methodology

- The focus inspection was conducted on 6, 7 and 9 March 2012 to help the school review the effectiveness of its medium of instruction (MOI) arrangements for S1 and S2 in the 2011/12 school year. Below is a summary of the arrangements:
  - In four S1 and five S2 classes, English is used as the MOI for the content subjects Mathematics and Integrated Science (IS). In two S1 and three S2 classes, English is also used as the MOI for the content subjects Geography, History, Visual Arts, Music, Physical Education, Home Economics, Computer Literacy and Design and Technology.
- The inspection team used the following methods to review the effectiveness of the above arrangements:
  - Observation of 13 S1 and S2 lessons taught by 11 teachers, including 6 Mathematics, 3 IS, 2 Geography and 2 Visual Arts lessons;
  - Observation of various school activities, including Morning Assembly Speech, Reading Session, Radio Show, TV Show, Board Games, Hot Chocolate Day and Fruit Punch Day;
  - Meetings and interviews with the Principal, the Vice-Principal with a leading role in the school-based MOI arrangements, the MOI Team, the Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) task group, panel chairs of subjects for which English is used as the MOI at S1 and S2, subject teachers concerned, the school librarian, the native-speaking English teachers (NET) and 9 randomly selected students;
  - Study of documents and information provided by the school; and
  - Study of samples of students' work and assessment papers.
- The inspection findings presented in this report were derived from the corporate judgement of the inspection team based on the information collected through the above methods.
2. Planning, Implementation and Evaluation of the School-based MOI Arrangements

- In its current 3-year School Development Plan (2011-14), "catering for learner diversity" is one of the four major concerns. Particular attention has been given to students' diversity in language capability. Students are allocated into either classes in which English is used as the MOI for all content subjects except Chinese and Putonghua, or classes in which English is used as the MOI for Mathematics and IS only. A streaming mechanism, based on students' performance in the Pre-Secondary One Hong Kong Attainment Test (pre-S1 HKAT), English marks and overall academic performance in the internal summative assessments, has been put in place and reviewed in a timely manner to ensure that students are allocated to the classes which suit their language ability. To avoid disruptive change from using English to using Chinese as the MOI, or vice versa, for any particular students during the 3-year junior secondary phase, streaming takes place only when they are allocated to S1 classes and when promoted to S2.

- To support students to use English to learn the content subjects and to cater for learning diversity, a range of measures has been launched, which includes split class teaching for two S2 Mathematics classes, regular English and Mathematics after-school classes, Saturday subject-related support programmes, adjusting schemes of work and the provision of tailor-made teaching materials. Worth mentioning are the timely after-school remedial classes arranged for students with lower performance in the Mathematics and IS term tests. Commendable efforts have also been put into increasing the students' exposure to English through the implementation of an array of co-curricular activities and a series of reading schemes. The school adopts a whole-school approach in the planning and implementation of these arrangements. The English teachers and the three NET have worked collaboratively to cultivate students' interest in learning and using English outside the classroom. The school librarian and the subject teachers have put joint efforts into nurturing students' reading habits. On the whole, the MOI arrangements are suitably in place to support the learning needs of both the more able and the less able students.

- One major MOI arrangement is the promotion of language learning across the curriculum involving English, Geography, and IS. In Geography, tips on the use of language items are added in the school-based teaching materials, for example, the use of capital letters for place names, the use of agreement and the pronunciation of homonyms. In IS, cross-curricular language worksheets are given to students to provide language practice. The teachers are working collaboratively to identify students' language needs and to design teaching materials. However, to accurately assess students' ability levels and cater for their language support needs, especially in reading and writing, a more in-depth understanding of the language used in a particular content subject is required. The English panel could offer further support by re-sequencing the teaching of some language functions and giving extra attention to the use of such functions in the context of humanities and science issues.
Due attention has been given to teachers' professional development needs and capacity building for supporting the implementation of the MOI arrangements. Teachers are encouraged to attend professional development courses run by the Education Bureau (EDB) and the teacher training institutions. Sharing sessions on MOI issues and practices are arranged on staff development days and in staff meetings. Collaborative lesson planning and peer lesson observation are also encouraged in the school. On the whole, teachers are willing and ready to share and work collaboratively. To build on the strengths, professional sharing among teachers, both at the school and subject levels, could be focused more on pedagogical strategies to tackle students' language barriers in classroom teaching and learning. Teachers could work collaboratively to draw up specific strategies to teach some particular content in their subject and this, in turn, could be the focus of peer lesson observation and post-observation sharing. Observations gained could subsequently be used for the identification of students' language needs mentioned above.

An MOI Team has been set up to formulate and evaluate its whole-school language policy (WSLP). The current effort has been put into the development of bi-literacy and tri-lingualism in students, the promotion of language across the curriculum and the implementation of the Refined English Enhancement Scheme (2011-13) (REES) drawn up to strengthen students' ability and confidence to use the language to learn. Various ongoing mechanisms are also in place to monitor and evaluate the progress of the WSLP and MOI measures. These include lesson observation, meetings of subject panels and the LAC task group, analysis of students' performance in assessments and surveys on views from teachers and students on various English-related activities. To better inform the planning of various MOI arrangements, professional sharing and school-based evaluation should continue at appropriate intervals so as to help fine-tune the arrangements where necessary.

3. Learning and Teaching

3.1 Curriculum and Assessment

Good efforts have been made in curriculum adaptation in some subjects to address students' learning needs and cater for their learning diversity. Placing appropriate emphasis on the core parts of the curriculum, re-sequencing topics in the scheme of work, and adjusting teaching materials and strategies are the major curriculum adaptations made to help students to learn subject knowledge and skills in English more effectively. Due attention has also been given to addressing students' subject-related language support needs. In Mathematics, the teaching of subject-specific vocabulary and commonly used sentence patterns is integrated into the curriculum. In Geography and IS, cross-subject collaboration with the English panel has been strengthened during this school year. Subject-related language items are incorporated in the Geography teaching materials, while practices on language items are designed for IS classes. At the subject level,
discussion on curriculum planning and implementation and the teaching of language items takes place in panel meetings and in informal sharing. For professional development and capacity building, peer lesson observation is coordinated by some subject panels with focuses on either catering for learner diversity, long-hour class teaching or the effective use of English as the MOI. To facilitate pre- and post-lesson professional exchange on using English as the MOI, the focus could be on specific pedagogies and the scaffolding of students’ learning.

- Assignment inspection, checking of assessment papers in terms of content and language accuracy, panel meetings and lesson observation are the means used to monitor the quality of learning and teaching. Assessment data are mainly used for streaming and selecting students for remedial support programmes. In some subjects, students’ performance in term tests and internal examinations are analysed to inform classroom teaching.

- There is a good range of assignments to assess students’ learning performance, such as textbook exercises, tailor-made worksheets, dictation, projects and book reports. The assignments, on the whole, are suitably designed in terms of coverage and level of difficulty and serve the purpose of facilitating classroom teaching and consolidating learning. In one subject, hints on the use of subject-related items, vocabulary and writing patterns with examples are provided to address students’ language needs. The assessment papers are suitably designed and the language used is, in general, appropriately pitched at students’ ability levels. However, to cater for students’ language support needs, especially for those with lower language ability, more scaffolding could be provided through, for instance, breaking a complicated question into smaller parts that are more manageable for the students. Teachers’ marking is appropriate. Some teachers also give feedback on students’ performance and help them improve their language in the assignments. To help inform classroom teaching and learning, analysis focusing on students’ difficulties as demonstrated in their assignments and assessment, should also be conducted.

3.2 Support Measures

- To help S1 students adapt to the use of English in the classroom, a summer bridging programme has been organised. The programme consists of the teaching of different language skills, phonics and Language Arts, and subject matter within Mathematics and IS. Another summer bridging course has also been run for those students being promoted from an S1 class where Chinese is used as the MOI for Geography and History to an S2 class where English is used as the MOI for most content subjects. With the launching of the REES, a series of support measures has been implemented to enhance students’ language skills, including the integration of web-based popular resources into the school-based curriculum and the development of a school-based E-learning platform. As ongoing support, a range of after-school learning programmes is organised for S1 and S2 students, such as Saturday English Enhancement Classes, English and Mathematics remedial classes for those identified in term assessments as lower-achievers.
• Commendable efforts have been made to widen students’ exposure to English and to encourage them to use the language outside the classroom. A series of reading schemes has been launched, including the Chinese and English extensive reading schemes, the morning reading session and a subject-related Reading Award Scheme, to nurture students’ reading habits. These schemes not only help to widen the reading scope of students but also promote learning through reading with the implementation of para-reading activities, such as writing book reports, reading worksheets, and oral book sharing by students. The implementation of an array of co-curricular activities helps to create an English speaking atmosphere in the campus. Arrangements, such as the English Assembly talks, public announcements made in English and sharing by students, provide ample opportunities for them to speak publicly. Regular festive events and a series of ‘fun’ activities held during lunch time and after school help to develop students’ speaking ability through immersion as well as their social skills through interaction with their peers, teachers and the NET.

• The school has also made good use of bulletin boards and spaces in the classroom and around the campus by displaying English prints of various kinds to expose students to more English. The NET have devoted a lot of effort to running co-curricular and English learning activities and, also, serve as resource persons. In planning for activities, some attention could be given to their relationship with the formal curriculum. Some activities organised can be related, for instance, to themes within classroom teaching of the content subjects. This would not only consolidate classroom learning but also enable an extension or application of classroom learning to co-curricular activities.

3.3 Classroom Learning and Teaching

• The lessons are well organised with clear objectives. Most of them begin with revision of prior knowledge. Visual aids, such as photographs, video and PowerPoint slides, are properly used to stimulate students’ interest and to facilitate their learning of the subject content in English. In some lessons, pair work and group discussion are conducted for students to communicate and work with peers collaboratively, to talk through and to practise what they have learnt in English. Such opportunities could be further promoted to encourage active participation in lessons.

• Students are attentive and motivated. They are able to follow instructions and are engaged in class activities. Most of them show good grasp of subject vocabulary. Some of them take the initiative to jot down notes, highlight key words or use self-learning tools, such as the dictionary, to complete learning tasks. In general, they are willing to answer questions. When given the opportunity, they can mostly respond in English clearly using subject-specific terms. In some lessons, they respond to teachers’ prompts and use the feedback to improve. The more able students demonstrate the ability to give elaborate responses and use complete sentences in their answers. Given students’ ability and willingness to attempt answers, there could be more paraphrasing and rephrasing of their responses to further develop their confidence and competence in applying what they have learnt in English. A wider range of questions that provoke thinking
can be employed.

- Teachers can, generally, give instructions and present the subject content in English clearly. Most of them are aware of students’ language support needs. To support students’ acquisition of subject-related vocabulary, strategies, such as using word cards, highlighting key words in colours, breaking words into syllables and reading aloud, are used. Questions are frequently asked to check students’ understanding and monitor their learning progress, with timely and positive feedback given by teachers in response. More diversified strategies to cater for learner diversity could be provided, such as giving more pre-task guidance, supporting students in the learning process and giving specific feedback. There could be more opportunities for students to recapitulate the key learning points through giving prompts and suggestions. Teachers could involve students in joint construction of knowledge by helping them verbalise their ideas in English.
4. Way Forward

The school has placed emphasis on catering for learner diversity in language capability. A streaming mechanism, based on students' performance in the pre-S1 HKAT, English marks and overall academic performance in the internal summative assessments, has been put in place and is reviewed in a timely manner to ensure that students are allocated to the classes which suit their language ability. To cater for learner diversity and to help students to use English to learn, a range of measures has been launched. In terms of remedial support programmes, split class teaching has been adopted for two S2 Mathematics classes, summer bridging programmes for S1 and S2 students and regular English and Mathematics after-school classes have been organised. In terms of formal curriculum, efforts have been made to promote language learning across the curriculum with special focus on the content subjects IS and Geography. Language tips are incorporated in the teaching materials and cross-curricular language practices are designed to cater for students' language support needs. Some subject teachers have also helped students learn better through curriculum adaptation and re-sequencing topics in the scheme of work. In terms of the enhancement of language use in the campus, a series of reading schemes and an array of co-curricular activities are held. These regular MOI measures help to widen students' exposure to English and to bolster their confidence to use the language outside the classroom. In class, the lessons are well conducted with clear objectives. Teachers are, generally, able to present in English clearly and help students acquire subject-related vocabulary through different strategies.

For continuous improvement of the school-based MOI arrangements, the school could direct more effort and attention to the following issues:

To better address students' subject-related language needs

- To accurately match work to students' ability levels and cater for their language support needs, especially in reading and writing, a more in-depth understanding of the language used in a particular content subject is required. This can be done through an analysis of the language features of the content subjects and identification of students' weaknesses and difficulties as revealed in the assessment outcomes.

- Strategies on how to address such weaknesses and difficulties through tailor-made teaching materials and classroom teaching could then be drawn up. This could also be the focus of collaborative lesson planning and peer class observation, both of which have long been put into practice. Observations gained through subsequent post-lesson sharing could be used for the identification of students' language needs.

- The English Panel could offer further support, in due course, by re-sequencing the teaching of some language functions and giving extra attention to the use of such functions in the context of humanities and science issues. The panel could also work collaboratively, where necessary, with the subject teachers to draw up
strategies to help students’ tackle language barriers in the learning process.

- In designing assessment materials and in classroom teaching, more attention could be given to supporting students at the point of need, especially those with lower language ability. Such strategies may include breaking into smaller parts a complicated assessment question so as to make it more manageable for the students. Repeating, re-casting and elaborating a key concept in teaching and providing chances for students to clarify and extend their thinking would also be helpful.

- In planning for co-curricular activities, some attention could be given to their relationship with the formal curriculum. Some activities, for example, could be related, thematically, to classroom teaching, especially to that of the content subjects. This would not only consolidate classroom learning but also enable an extension or application of classroom learning to take place in co-curricular activities.

- To better inform the planning of various MOI arrangements, professional sharing and school-based evaluation should continue at appropriate intervals so as to help fine-tune the arrangements where necessary.