

**Focus Inspection Report**  
**on the Use of English as the Medium of Instruction**  
**at the Junior Secondary Level**

**Shatin Pui Ying College**

**Address of School : 9 Fung Shun Street, Wo Che Estate,  
Shatin, New Territories**

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**Quality Assurance Division  
Education Bureau**

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## **Focus Inspection Team**

### **Team Leader**

Ms MO Lai-ping, Anita

### **Members**

Mr LAW Hon-fai

Mr LO Chi-lap

Ms LO Chui-tong

Mr LOU Kai-bun

Ms MA Kwan-yi

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# 1. Inspection Methodology

- The focus inspection was conducted on 4-6 May 2011 to help the school review the effectiveness of its medium of instruction (MOI) arrangements for S1 in the 2010/11 school year. Below is a summary of the arrangements:
  - In S1 English is used as the MOI for all subjects except Chinese and Chinese History.
- The inspection team used the following methods to review the effectiveness of the above arrangements:
  - Observation of 11 S1 lessons taught by 11 teachers, including two lessons each of Mathematics, History, Integrated Science (IS), Computer Literacy and Physical Education, and one Liberal Studies (LS) lesson;
  - Observation of various school activities including after lunch reading time, a book fair, S3 project learning student presentation, students as trainers of S4 Youth Forum speech training and students sharing on how they learn English as a second language with visitors from the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies;
  - Meetings and interviews with the Principal, Vice-Principal, Language Across the Curriculum (LAC) Team, English-rich Environment Team, panel chairs of Mathematics, History, LS, IS, Computer Literacy, Physical Education and English, subject teachers concerned, School Librarian, two teaching assistants, a native-speaking English teacher (NET) and one group of randomly selected S1 students;
  - Study of related 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 alignment with its core values to equip students with an international outlook, to realise their potential and to let them shine, the school places emphasis on developing students' bi-literacy and tri-lingualism in formulating its whole-school language policy (WSLP). A whole-school approach putting emphasis on concerted efforts has been adopted in the cycle of planning, implementation and evaluation for the WSLP, which is guided and monitored by the Academic Committee. Since the late 1990s, it has been an established practice to use English as the MOI for all subjects except Chinese and Chinese History. Currently, Putonghua is adopted as the MOI for Chinese in one S1 class and Chinese is adopted as the MOI for LS in the senior secondary curriculum. The WSLP is in line with the direction of the school development. In its current 3-year School Development Plan (SDP), commencing from 2009/10, "Developing strong language capacities" in both English and Chinese is one of the four major concerns. In implementing its school-based MOI plan, the school adopts a whole-school approach to developing students' English proficiency, and aims at preparing students for effective learning of the new senior secondary (NSS) curriculum. A good range of strategies and support measures has been devised, which covers nurturing students' reading habits, enhancing their interest and proficiency in English through a variety of programmes and extra-curricular activities (ECA), and enriching the English learning environment.
- In supporting the use of English as the MOI, subject panels have suitably formulated their programme plans to include such tasks as adjusting schemes of work and organising a summer English bridging programme and content subject bridging programmes in the first two weeks for S1 students. In recent years, the LAC Team and the English-rich Environment Team have been set up to strengthen the support and implementation of cross-curricular development for improving the learning and teaching of content subjects in English, and enrichment of the English learning environment respectively. The school has made commendable efforts at maintaining a favourable English-learning environment in the classroom and around the school.
- The planning process of the WSLP is participatory and teachers have engaged in a concerted effort to make more effective use of English as the MOI. In the implementation of its WSLP, due emphasis is placed on teachers' professional development (PD) and student support, and a good range of measures has been strategically planned and implemented. The implementation is monitored through a good range of on-going review mechanisms, which include teachers' observation, meetings of subject panels, the LAC Team and English-rich Environment Team, analysis of students' performance in assignments and assessment, as well as collection of self-evaluation data, such as student survey findings. Evaluation at school and subject levels has been rigorous, with a sharp focus placed on learning and teaching, generating useful findings to inform future planning. For the current year of implementation of the school-based MOI plan, mid-year evaluation is suitably conducted in the staff meeting to review its effectiveness. Teachers are generally able to identify students' language support needs and their own PD needs, and make use of the findings to inform future planning.

## 3. Learning and Teaching

### 3.1 Curriculum and Assessment

- Building on the experience acquired from the Development of Language across the Curriculum for English –medium Education (DOLACEE) project, school-based PD sharing and language cross-curricular mapping in the junior secondary and senior secondary curricular have been conducted to enhance students' language proficiency. Panel chairs and teachers continue to attend relevant training in support of the use of English as the MOI, and sharing sessions have been organised on staff development days and at staff meetings. Apart from the promotion of collaborative lesson planning (CLP) and peer lesson observation (PLO) within the same subject panel, individual subject panels have arranged teachers' sharing on learning and teaching at panel meetings. PLO with specific learning and teaching focuses are frequently arranged on questioning techniques and interactive learning and teaching in a 55-minute lesson, to gauge the effectiveness of the implementation of the extended duration of lesson time, which has been adopted since the implementation of the NSS curriculum. An experience-sharing culture has been created among teachers within and across subject departments and outside school. Given teachers' openness in sharing with others on learning and teaching, PD within and across subjects on how to address the language support needs of S1 students with focuses identified could be promoted, using video recorded lessons to share the good practices across subjects or KLAs.
- External resources from the tertiary institutions and the Education Bureau's school-based support services have been suitably tapped to support staff capacity building and the enhancement of students' interest and language proficiency in both Chinese and English. School-based curriculum development support programmes include areas on LAC in the junior secondary curriculum, reading, vocabulary building and the NSS curriculum development. With the establishment of the LAC Team, comprising a Geography teacher and an English teacher who also teaches History in the junior secondary levels, students' support needs in using English as the MOI in content subjects are identified. Difficulties in learning content subjects encompass language aspects such as vocabulary building, sentence structures and organisation of ideas in various text types and essay writing across the year levels. The difficulties identified are more prominent in the learning of Personal, Social and Humanities Education (PSHE) subjects including History, Geography and LS, and priority is duly given to developing LAC for the PSHE subjects.
- For further improvement in its school-based curriculum, the school could focus more attention on promoting self-directed learning and catering for learner diversity, and continue to address students' needs in learning both subject content and the language required. Capitalising on the school's established practice of CLP and PLO, a stronger link could be forged between them, with a sharper focus on classroom learning and teaching strategies for catering for learner diversity and classroom assessment for learning, with the use of appropriate questioning techniques and formative feedback.

- Under the facilitation of the LAC Team, some learning support material in the PSHE subjects have been systematically developed to enhance students' learning of English, through strengthening collaboration among the relevant subject panels, and through devising strategies for vocabulary acquisition and grammar learning for S1 to S3 students. Post-lesson supplementary practices have been designed to address learning difficulties identified. The language elements in the materials are put under meaningful subject contexts. To cope with the students' language needs, the English department has adjusted the sequence of teaching some content, such as the use of passive voice and adjective patterns, to tie in with the Geography and History curriculum respectively.
- Effective measures have been adopted by most of the subjects using English as the MOI to boost students' verbal presentation skills. They include encouraging students, as regular class activities, to make comments on current social issues or to give a short presentation on subject-related materials in class. Through engaging students in these interactive activities and the S2 and S3 cross-curricular project learning student presentations, their higher order thinking skills and generic skills are also being developed.
- Developing students' reading habits and strategies is a key strategy for "developing strong language capacities". A whole-school approach is adopted and the school is successful in cultivating students' interest in reading and a reading culture is emerging. In addition to the English reading lessons, reading time is allocated after lunch, with the reading of English and Chinese materials promoted in alternate months. Sessions are held for senior form students who serve as language partners for their junior counterparts, and also for teachers, to share their reading experience with other students. The subject panels have prepared readers or subject-related reading materials to develop students' reading skills. Some subjects have also set up an e-forum in the school's intranet to enhance the students' reading and writing skills, as well as critical thinking, by involving students in various discussion groups. Good support is also provided by the School Library in promoting reading across the curriculum through collaboration with different subject panels, such as organising a variety of reading schemes, book exhibitions and story-teller series, with teachers and senior students sharing reading with other students.
- Teachers demonstrate a strong awareness of the need to address students' language learning needs in designing their assignments. A variety of assignments and school-based supplementary learning materials, such as case study materials, graded worksheets and problem-solving exercises have been developed by various subjects to cater for students' language support needs and to facilitate the learning of the subject content. Useful multimedia materials and web-based resources are recommended to help students learn the pronunciation of subject-specific terms. A good range of learning material covering all content subjects concerned is used in the bridging programmes conducted for S1 students. Various types of questions are devised to develop and address students' language abilities, such as writing short paragraphs and essays, reading comprehension and reasoning among the subjects concerned. Bonus marks are specifically allocated to correct language usage in some subjects. The performance in assignments and assessments of the high ability groups is good. They are capable of writing complete sentences and short paragraphs, while the performance of students in the lower ability groups needs improvement. Marking of students' assignment is carefully done and in general, useful comments are given to help students improve their learning.

- The LAC Team has been successful in promoting cross-curricular collaboration, including collaboration between the panels of English and PSHE subjects, in adjusting the junior secondary curriculum and preparing useful learning support material. Students' common language mistakes as well as good performance in answering the questions during the mid-term examination of the mid-term examination of the PSHE subjects are consolidated to provide formative feedback to facilitate students' reflection and improvement in their learning. Teaching plans and supplementary worksheets have also been adjusted or designed with reference to detailed analysis of students' performance in assessments. These measures have effectively facilitated student learning of subject content and the language required. To build on school's strength in cross-curricular collaboration, such good practices could be promoted in the junior secondary curriculum of the Mathematics and Science KLAs.

### **3.2 Support Measures**

- Strong resource support is rendered for and commendable efforts have been made through a whole-school approach to maintaining a favourable English-learning environment inside the classroom and around the campus. Through the joint effort of the English-rich Environment Team and the English Panel, with additional manpower of two teaching assistants, an array of activities is organised to enhance students' exposure to English, boost their confidence in using English and provide opportunities for authentic language use outside the classroom. For example, the weekly English Speaking Day, English week, Youth Forum, and the time-tabled cross-curricular project learning for S2 and S3 are organised to develop students' speaking and presentation skills as well as their critical thinking. Through sharing with delegations from local and overseas organisations, students are trained to speak in front of audiences of different sizes and to be ready for queries and challenges in authentic situations.
- In addition to the festive events, a range of co-curricular activities is organised to enrich students' speaking and writing skills, including the English Society, English Debate Society, English Literature Society, script-writing group and the publication of the Matrix, the English school newsletter. To provide students with enjoyable experiences in using English, some fun activities are also organised, such as scouting led by the NET, summer English Day Camp for S1-S3, Summer English Camp for S1-S6, S1 and P6 English Fun Camp and Summer Overseas Immersion Study Tour. The biennial English musical is a successful English-rich learning experience for students, both on stage and behind the scene, created through a whole-school approach and concerted effort made by teachers and students. Above all, the status of English as the official language for communication in school functions and morning assemblies has been well-maintained, which provides ample opportunities for students, including S1 students, to serve as masters of ceremony (MC). The English-rich Environment Team systematically builds up a central depository with the collection of scripts of MC and notes on useful expressions in various school activities, which provides useful reference to developing students' capacity in public speaking. To foster a print-rich environment, the school is making good use of classroom bulletin boards and notice boards, with the display of idioms, quotations, notices and students' work of both English and content subjects, around the campus.
- To help S1 students adapt to the use of English in the classroom, bridging programmes have been provided, including a 5-day English summer course for S1



students and subject-based bridging programmes launched in the first two weeks of the school year. While mixed ability group is adopted in other year levels, the S1 streaming mechanism, based on students' performance in the pre-S1 Hong Kong Attainment Test, is conducive to reducing the learning differences among students and rendering more individual support, through split class teaching for the lower ability groups for English and Mathematics. To enhance students' interest in learning English, the junior secondary English curriculum has been enriched with more language arts elements, with structured S1 drama lessons in particular. Given that students' weaknesses in pronunciation and spelling and the acquisition of subject-related vocabulary have been identified by teachers and students, a phonics approach and vocabulary building strategies in the junior secondary English Language curriculum could be strengthened.

### **3.3 Classroom Learning and Teaching**

- The use of English for learning and teaching the content subjects is consistent and effective. Teachers demonstrate good professional knowledge and are able to present and explain the learning content clearly and systematically. They are mostly proficient in English and capable of conducting the lessons effectively in English. Students are attentive, cooperative and motivated to learn. They are generally confident in using English to express themselves and answer teachers' questions, while the more passive students are soft spoken and use single words or simple phrases. Teachers are supportive and the teacher-student relationship is harmonious.
- Lessons are well-organised, with clear focuses and learning objectives. Teachers begin lessons by revising students' prior knowledge through questioning. They make good use of teaching resources and a variety of teaching aids, such as PowerPoint presentations, subject tools and games, to stimulate students' interest and facilitate the teachers' presentation and the students' understanding. In a Mathematics lesson, an information technology software, "SCRATCH", was suitably used to help students grasp the mathematics concept through the display of visual images of different shapes. Students in general can follow teachers' instructions and are engaged in learning activities, such as group discussions, experiments and practical tasks. They can grasp the knowledge and skills in completing the learning tasks as required. School-based worksheets are mostly used to guide students to complete the learning tasks and consolidate their learning.
- To support students' language needs, teachers duly adopt different strategies to tackle the pronunciation of unfamiliar words by breaking up words into syllables and asking students to read aloud in chorus. More visual clues on the segmentation of syllables could better support students' grasp of pronunciation through phonics applied. To develop students' acquisition of subject vocabulary, common strategies adopted include rephrasing the difficult words, providing more examples and including daily life examples, to elaborate the meaning to help students grasp the learning content and concepts. In some lessons, due emphasis is placed on recycling of the subject-specific terms and developing sentence patterns for describing subject concepts. Given appropriate guidance, some students are able to use the subject-specific language to express the concepts acquired.
- As part of the design of PSHE lessons, students' presentation on prepared topics or current social issues is arranged at the beginning of the lesson, followed by students posing questions to the presenters for clarification and sometimes challenging their

viewpoints. The teachers tactfully redirect the questions and student feedback to other students to enhance peer interaction. In some lessons, group discussions are organised and on some occasions, opportunities are provided for student presentation which helps them develop their confidence in presenting in English in class. Some students raise questions to seek further explanation from teachers or students after their presentations. Students' interaction could be enhanced by adopting such a good practice of inviting peer feedback and sharing of their views to extend their understanding of the subject knowledge. However, some students use Cantonese to communicate among themselves when performing practical tasks and conducting group discussions. In designing the learning tasks, attention should be given to providing an authentic situation for encouraging more active use of English, and providing students with clearer pre-task guidance and support to facilitate them to use the target language. More collaborative activities could be arranged to promote peer interaction and to use the subject-specific language to explain their thinking process and the methods applied.

- Questioning is the main strategy adopted by teachers in explanation and checking students' understanding of the lesson content. Students in general are eager to answer teachers' questions and participate in the learning activities. Some teachers have asked probing questions to encourage elaboration of ideas and critical thinking. When formative feedback in terms of appropriate clues and hints is provided, students are able to elaborate their ideas or probe the topic in greater detail using appropriate subject-specific language patterns. For enhancing learning and teaching, more probing and guiding questions could be adopted to scaffold students in using the appropriate subject-specific language and to provoke deeper thinking. In some lessons, several more active students dominate the classroom interaction. The learning needs of students of different abilities could be better catered for with graded questions. To provide individual support to students, more specific feedback could be given to help them reflect and improve their learning.
- In an IS lesson where learning and teaching is highly effective, the microscope was aptly connected to an overhead projector to facilitate students to observe the scientific phenomenon of the experiment clearly, which enabled them to be more closely engaged in the learning process. Contextual questions with useful clues were effectively used to help students understand the subject-specific terminologies and concepts. Prompting and probing questions were raised in a timely manner with specific feedback to help students improve their learning.
- In some lessons, teachers reminded students to jot notes, underline the key points and look up the difficult words in the dictionary. More varied strategies such as surfing the internet, using different study tools including graphic organisers, could be adopted to help students develop the habit of self-directed learning. Teachers usually ended the lessons either by summarising the main learning points or assigning consolidation tasks. Some lessons ended in a rush and there could be better time management, to allow time for students to consolidate and reflect on their learning to make improvement.

## 4. Way Forward

The school adopts a whole-school approach to planning and implementing its WSLP, which aims at developing students' bi-literacy and tri-lingualism. While the use of English as the MOI for all subjects except Chinese and Chinese History has been a long-established practice, a good range of measures has been strategically adopted to strengthen teachers' PD and support student learning in English. External resources have been suitably tapped to support staff capacity building and school-based curriculum development on such areas as LAC, reading and vocabulary building.

Led by the LAC Team and drawing on support from the English panel, cross-curricular collaboration has been strengthened for developing learning support material of some subjects on vocabulary acquisition and grammar learning. Concerted efforts have been made across the curriculum in developing students' reading habits and a reading culture. Strong resource support and schoolwide efforts have effectively maintained a favourable English-learning environment inside the classroom and around the campus. An array of activities is organised to enhance students' exposure to and use of English outside the classroom, with the biennial English musical being an exemplary opportunity and achievement.

Teachers have a strong awareness of the need to address students' language support needs through the bridging programmes in summer and in the first two weeks of the school year. Split class teaching in S1 for English and Mathematics are also able to provide additional support for addressing students' learning needs. Teachers demonstrate good English proficiency and professional knowledge to present and explain the learning content clearly and systematically. Students are attentive, cooperative and motivated to learn.

To build on current school's strengths for making continuous improvement to its school-based MOI arrangements, more attention could be given to the following:

### **Enhancing classroom teaching and learning strategies**

- To enable students to learn at their full potential, teachers could adopt a greater variety of teaching strategies to help students develop and practice self-directed learning skills and strategies. Some of such strategies are already in practice in some classrooms, such as note-taking, online search, and the use of the dictionary and graphic organisers. Purposeful pre-lesson preparation tasks could be assigned more widely across the curriculum and further utilised to form a more integral part of the learning tasks. To cater for the learning needs of students of different abilities, teachers could make more use of graded questions and specific, formative feedback to help them reflect and improve students' learning. Given teachers' openness in engaging in professional sharing, and the effective classroom teaching practice of some teachers, PD within and across subjects or KLA could be promoted on how to address the language support needs of S1 students with the focuses identified, including with the use of excerpts of video-recorded lessons to share good practices across classrooms and across subjects or KLAs.