

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

**The YWCA
Hioe Tjo Yoeng College**

Address of School : 6 Sheung Wo Street, Ho Man Tin, Kowloon.

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**Quality Assurance Division
Education Bureau**

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1. Inspection Methodology

- The focus inspection was conducted on 11 and 12 November 2010 to help the school review the effectiveness of the use of English as the medium of instruction (MOI) for S1 in the 2010/11 school year. Below is a summary of the arrangements:
 - English is adopted as the MOI for all subjects except Chinese, Chinese History, Religious Education and Liberal Studies.
- The inspection team used the following methods to review the effectiveness of the above arrangements:
 - Observation of S1 lessons taught by eight teachers, including two in Mathematics, two in Integrated Science, two in Computer Literacy, and one each in History and Geography;
 - Observation of various school activities including morning assemblies, and the learning and teaching activities on Arts Education, Home Economics and Design and Technology at S1;
 - Meetings and interviews with the Principal, the Vice Principal, the School Executive Committee, panel chairs of subjects for which English is used as the MOI at S1, subject teachers concerned, the teacher librarian, and a group of randomly selected S1 students;
 - Study of related documents and information provided by the school; and
 - Study of samples of student 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

- The school has formulated a whole-school language policy covering the development of both Chinese and English. Among teachers there is a shared understanding that a balance should be struck between the use of English for learning and teaching the majority of content subjects, and maintaining the use of Chinese for promoting students' moral and spiritual developments. In alignment with the school's motto of 'Think Critically, Be Moral', the school's language policy aims at equipping students to think independently and critically, in addition to being able to communicate, in both Chinese and English. Currently Chinese is adopted as the MOI for Liberal Studies. Since the late 1990s, it has been an established school practice to use English as the MOI for all subjects except Chinese, Chinese History and Religious Education across all year levels.
- The overall planning, implementation and evaluation (P-I-E) for the learning and teaching of all subject panels are guided and monitored by the schools' School Executive Committee, which comprises the Principal, a Vice Principal, and panel chairs of some subjects. As part of the whole school language policy, the school-based MOI arrangements are also under the purview of the School Executive Committee. During the first few years of implementing the school's MOI policy, the school involved teachers in curriculum planning, encouraged them to undergo professional development both within and outside the school, and made use of school-based evaluation tools to monitor students' readiness for and attitude to the use of English as MOI. In recent years, the MOI arrangements have been implemented as one of the routine school tasks, with specific implementation and evaluation work undertaken by subject panels adopting English as the MOI.
- Specific strategies are devised to help SI students adapt to instruction in English, including a bridging programme during the summer vacation and additional teacher support to students in the first two cycles. The school has also made efforts at maintaining a favourable English-learning environment. With reference to the use of English as MOI, for all year levels, the school mainly monitors curriculum implementation by considering the public assessment results and students' willingness to use English inside and outside the classrooms. Evaluation is informally conducted in an ad hoc manner, and findings have yet to be more systematically used to inform future curriculum planning. To better gauge the effectiveness of learning and teaching in English, the monitoring and support roles of the panel chairpersons could also be strengthened. For example, observation of SI lessons should be stepped up, to learn about the strengths and areas for improvement in classroom learning and teaching. On the whole, the P-I-E of the school-based MOI arrangements could be strengthened at the subject level, for monitoring the process of learning and teaching, and findings could be used more systematically to inform the curriculum plans and teaching strategies of the relevant content subjects.

3. Learning and Teaching

3.1 Curriculum and Assessment

- In planning the curriculum, teachers are clearly aware of the need for adapting curriculum and teaching materials with due considerations given to supporting students' language ability and needs. Language features are highlighted in the schemes of work to raise teachers' awareness of students' language needs, e.g. in the use of subject-specific vocabulary and the need to answer questions in complete sentences. Curriculum and teaching materials are adapted through re-sequencing of content by its complexity, and some worksheets are designed with attention paid to helping students learn different sentence patterns. For most subjects, essential learning content and targets are appropriately covered. Some teachers have planned to make progressively higher demand in the English language used by students, and others have made good attempts at judicious trimming of the content to provide more instruction time for developing students' language ability.
- In some subjects, appropriate attention has been paid to including reading and writing tasks in assignments, and getting students to do oral presentations in class as a means to increasing their use of spoken English. Reading to learn skills are promoted in mini-project assignments. Specific writing objectives for different levels are spelt out. Support has been sought, informally, from English teachers for teaching students about a particular text type associated with a subject-based mini-project.
- In general, due attention has been paid to the use of appropriate teaching materials and resources. Some teachers have designed worksheets to address students' language support needs while matching students' different abilities. When the language used in the coursebooks for one subject is considered inappropriate for students, after discussion, teachers decided to have them replaced. Teachers of Computer Literacy have made plans well in advance to procure the English versions of computer software.
- Helping students with specific-related vocabulary is a common practice among teachers. For most of the topics to be taught, teachers have prepared worksheets with a list of the subject-related vocabulary to familiarise students with the key words. Most teachers have instructed students to keep a glossary of subject-related vocabulary, and to look up the dictionary as a pre-lesson preparation task. Dictation, too, is a common class activity, and some teachers give students short quizzes in an attempt to provide contextual clues for revising the vocabulary items. However, to better help students in vocabulary acquisition, teachers could provide students with more opportunities for recycling and train them more systematically in vocabulary building strategies. Cross-curricular collaboration among teachers of different subjects is also recommended to avoid overloading students with a large but unconnected vocabulary.
- Workbooks are generally put to good use and worksheets are generally well-designed. The assignment book, used for Geography and History, is able to

support students' learning of subject-specific terms, knowledge and skills. Teachers' marking is carefully and conscientiously done, but some teachers are unable to provide formative feedback for improving students' language accuracy, including in their spelling of subject-related key words. In setting assessment papers, simple and clear rubrics are used, which are suited to students' ability at the early stage of S1 studies. Assessment papers of some subjects cover a range of items to assess subject knowledge and skills, and include open-ended questions that cover the assessment of skills of comparison, analysis and problem-solving.

- Teachers have made good efforts at regular evaluation of students' performance in tests and examinations. Some teaching materials have been adapted after reviewing students' results and comments based on teachers' observations. To better support students' learning needs, teacher evaluation could also focus on students' learning process, with follow-up strategies devised in a timely manner. Some teachers have clearly identified students' difficulty in expressing themselves in English at sentence-level. As such, greater use of assessment findings could be used to inform subsequent curriculum planning, for example, in providing more support for the learning of sentence structures and report writing.

3.2 Support Measures

- The bridging programme for S1 is effective in helping students adjust to learning in English. It comprises two parts, one part held before school starts, with the other taking place during the first two teaching cycles of the school year. Teachers are able to draw on previous experience gained to make timely adjustment to the arrangement of the bridging programme, and the school has planned to extend the summer programme with a sharper focus on the learning and teaching of English and content subjects. The current arrangement of splitting some classes for English lessons is conducive to reducing the learning differences among students.
- The school encourages teachers to engage in professional development and professional sharing activities. They are encouraged to share their learning points after attending training activities, and sharing on practical teaching experience is a standard agenda item of panel meetings. The gist of such sharing will be summarised in the panel's handbook for teachers' reference. There is cross-curricular collaboration between English teachers and those of some subjects on a limited scale, mainly for S3 project learning. When teachers of content subjects make the informal requests for joint efforts, they could always expect a positive response from the English panel.
- The school has maintained a favourable English-learning environment through the use of English in morning assemblies, English Speaking Week, online learning programme, classroom learning and teaching, and interactions between students and the Native-speaking English Teacher. Teachers generally make effective use of a range of teaching resources. However, students' use of learning resources can be further encouraged, including the use of library books and online resources for reading as well as learning subject-specific vocabulary and text types. The school library needs additional space and resources to further support students' learning needs. On the whole, the language-learning environment can be strengthened around the school by enhancing the connection between the print

display and student learning, and increasing students' use of English for authentic and purposeful communication inside and outside the classroom.

3.3 Classroom Learning and Teaching

- The use of English for learning and teaching the content subjects is consistent and generally effective. Lessons are well-organised, with clear focuses and learning objectives. Teachers are able to present and explain lesson content systematically and logically. They are able to rephrase, simplify, and make use of more examples and visual or graphic aids to help students grasp the learning content. Most teachers make use of demonstration, class work, and providing support to individual students to supplement their explanation. When the lesson is held in the laboratory, specimens, examples, and multi-sensory approaches are put to good use. An effective practice on vocabulary building, as observed in individual lessons, is teaching subject-related words through raising students' awareness of word families.
- Students have a very positive learning attitude, and are capable of following and responding to instructions in English. They are willing to communicate in English with teachers and fellow students, including during group work. Students have generally demonstrated readiness to learn the content subjects in English, and they appreciate the teachers' efforts at helping them to get used to it. Both teachers and students have made effective use of classroom language to facilitate participation and interactions between teacher and students, and among students. Some teachers are aware of the need to adapt their pedagogy to cater for students' learning needs as a result of using English as the MOI. Teachers of at least one content subject have purposefully added speaking activities to foster students' speaking skills. Some teachers make good use of students' common mistakes to provide learning opportunities for the whole class.
- Some lessons provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning outcomes through the use of English. However, mostly as a result of teachers' design of the lessons, students generally do not have many opportunities to express their ideas, raise questions, or share their views with fellow classmates. Some students lack confidence in speaking up, and respond to teachers only when asked, with mostly single words or phrases. Given the students' strong motivation and ability to learn in English, there could be more interactive learning activities in the classroom. In a couple of lessons, the teachers were over-ambitious and had included too many activities, resulting in a slightly rushed learning process. To help students learn better, teachers need to make ongoing adjustment to the pace of teaching with reference to students' learning progress. While teacher-student interactions are generally adequate, in most lessons students need more opportunities and guidance to use subject-specific language to develop and communicate ideas in English. Teachers frequently ask questions, but these mostly serve to check recall or understanding of facts. Not enough use has been made of a variety of questions and formative feedback to help students improve their learning. On the whole, catering for learner diversity in the classroom is not seen as a priority, and more attention could be paid to students who experience problems in grasping the learning content through English.

4. Way Forward

The implementation of the school-based MOI arrangements in S1 is generally smooth and in accordance with school planning. Good attempts have been made at curriculum and assessment adaptation through trimming and re-sequencing of teaching content, with steps taken to address students' learning needs related to subject-specific vocabulary, including through well-prepared worksheets. Teachers are competent in using English for clear and effective presentation, with the use of appropriate visual aids and multisensory approaches. Students are willing and capable of using English to learn. Their performance in assignments and assessment is generally good. Teachers have a strong commitment to implementing the school's language policy, which aims at enabling students to think independently and critically, in addition to being able to communicate, in both Chinese and English. Teachers are generally ready for, and some have engaged themselves in, professional sharing and exchange.

For continuous enhancement in the effectiveness of using English as MOI for content subjects, the school could pay more attention to the following:

4.1 Increase opportunities of discussing and thinking in English

- To build on the students' strong motivation and ability to learn in English, classroom teaching could be more interactive, with more opportunities and guidance for students to use subject-specific language to communicate and develop ideas in English. In line with school's emphasis on promoting critical thinking and self-regulation skills, there is room for developing students' ability to think and analyse in English through teachers' questioning and appropriate feedback, and in the long run to support their academic language development.

4.2 Strengthen evaluation to inform curriculum planning

- To better gauge the effectiveness of learning and teaching in English, the monitoring and support roles of the panel chairpersons could also be strengthened in the process of curriculum implementation, including through stepping up lesson observations. In addition to evaluating students' performance in examinations, more can be done on following up students' learning needs, including their language support needs, and making timely adjustment to curriculum planning and teaching strategies more systematically.