



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

**The Methodist Church HK
Wesley College**

**Address of School : 33 Siu Sai Wan Road, Chai Wan,
Hong Kong**

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**Quality Assurance and School-based Support Division
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1. Inspection Methodology

- The focus inspection was conducted on 18, 19, 22 and 27 March 2013 to help the school review the effectiveness of its medium of instruction (MOI) arrangements for S1, S2 and S3 in the 2012/13 school year. Below is a summary of the arrangements:
 - In three out of four classes in S1 and S2, respectively, English is used as the MOI for the content subjects of Mathematics, Science, History, Geography, Economics and Computer Literacy (CL). In the remaining S1 and S2 classes, Mathematics is taught in English and Extended Learning Activities (ELA) in English are arranged in Science, History, Geography, Economics and CL.
 - In three out of four classes in S3, English is used as the MOI for the content subjects of Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History, Geography, Economics and CL. In the remaining S3 class, Mathematics is taught in English, and ELA in English are arranged in Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History, Geography, Economics and CL.
- The inspection team used the following methods to review the effectiveness of the above arrangements:
 - Observation of 19 lessons at S1, S2 and S3, taught by 17 teachers, including 8 Mathematics, 6 Science, 3 Economics and 2 CL lessons;
 - Observation of various school activities, including morning reading sessions, and ELA in History, Geography and Economics at S1 and S3;
 - Meetings and interviews with the Principal, the Vice Principal, the Academic Development Committee (ADC), panel chairpersons of subjects using English as the MOI at S1, S2 and S3, subject teachers concerned and two groups of 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.

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2. Planning, Implementation and Evaluation of the School-based MOI Arrangements

- Taking into account teachers' readiness, parents' expectations and students' ability, the school has suitably devised its whole-school language policy (WSLP). In alignment with the WSLP, clear objectives are set in the school-based MOI arrangements to enhance students' English proficiency through more exposure to English and to better prepare them for their further studies in senior secondary. The process of planning in connection with the fine-tuned MOI arrangements has been participatory and transparent. Views of stakeholders have been suitably collected and considered. For instance, views of parents were collected through Parent-Teacher Association meetings. Many discussions have been held among teachers in meetings at various levels, such as the ADC, subject panels and staff meetings. As a result, a consensus on school-based MOI arrangements has been reached among teachers. The teachers playing a key role in the implementation of the WSLP have a clear understanding, and are supportive, of the school's MOI arrangements.
- The class allocation and re-allocation mechanisms have taken into account the ability of the students. At S1, students are allocated to the three classes where English is adopted as the MOI for the six content subjects on the basis of their performance in English in the Pre-S1 Hong Kong Attainment Test. At S2, arrangements are based on students' English results and overall academic performance at S1. Parents and students are duly informed of the mechanism details and criteria for admission to the classes using English as the MOI for the six content subjects. In previous years, some students were re-allocated into the S2 classes adopting English as the MOI for the six content subjects. The learning performance of those students has been closely monitored by the teachers through class observation and the test and examination results. Timely support has been provided to address the needs of the students concerned.
- Appropriate consideration has been given to the articulation between the senior and junior secondary curricula. At present, some subjects are offered in both languages for students to choose from, suitably catering for the needs of the students who learn those subjects in Chinese in the junior forms. S3 students can choose either English or Chinese in learning the related content subjects at senior secondary levels. Students who meet the selection criteria are admitted to the classes or groups using English as the MOI in the related content subjects in the senior forms. S3 students and their parents are well informed of the criteria, based on students' performance in both English and the related content subjects. Looking forward, it is important that the school continues to monitor the smoothness of articulation between the junior and senior secondary curriculum and attend to the bridging and support needs of students who have to

change from learning in English to learning in Chinese, and vice versa, for the related content subjects.

- To align with the implementation of the WSLP, the school has formulated “developing bi-literacy and tri-lingualism in students” and “developing students’ language capacities” as the school’s major concerns in the School Development Plans (SDP) for 2009/10 – 2011/12 and 2012/13 – 2014/15 school years, respectively. Corresponding targets and implementation strategies have been suitably devised by the ADC and subject panels concerned to address the school’s major concerns related to the WSLP. To support the implementation of measures addressing the major concerns, resources have been suitably deployed. In order to reduce the workload of teachers concerned, the school has used the funding under the Refined English Enhancement Scheme (REES) to employ an extra English teacher to develop the school-based curriculum and teaching materials to enhance the learning of S1-S3 students.⁴ A teaching assistant has also been employed under the REES to assist in the implementation of cross-curricular activities, and provide logistic support for the teachers in developing a school-based curriculum and teaching materials for ELA in English for S1-S3 students.
- Due emphasis has been placed, through professional sharing, on enhancing teachers’ capacity in teaching strategies. It has been arranged for teachers to attend the courses and seminars on teaching content subjects using English as the MOI, organised by the Education Bureau (EDB) or tertiary institutions, and for them to discuss with colleagues afterwards. Adequate opportunities have been provided for teachers to share with others through the subject panels and form meetings. Peer lesson observations (PLO), with the use of English as the MOI as one of the focuses, have been arranged among teachers of most content subjects. Scheduled collaborative lesson planning (CLP) is arranged in some content subjects and teachers more often exchange views on teaching through informal channels. With the funding from the REES, in-house workshops on the use of English as the MOI in content subject lessons are duly organised for Science and Humanities teachers, respectively. Lessons in Humanities subjects are observed by an educational consultant and detailed feedback on the learning and teaching of the lessons observed have been given to the teachers concerned to help improve their teaching strategies. Besides, lesson observation of most content subjects using English as the MOI have been conducted by the Principal, Vice Principal and English panel chairpersons for professional development purposes. Sharing of the findings of lesson observation has been arranged in the staff meetings for teachers to exchange experiences with others. With these various measures in place, teachers’ teaching strategies have been strengthened. In view of the fact that there is still a need to further enhance students’ learning outcomes in some aspects when English is adopted as the MOI, such as their confidence in speaking English and vocabulary acquisition, more related sharing of effective strategies and good practices could be arranged both within and

across subject panels.

- At present, the ADC, comprising the Vice Principal, chairperson of the Academic Committee and the content subject panel heads, has taken up the responsibility to oversee the implementation of the WSLP. The content subject panel heads have also closely monitored the implementation of the WSLP in their subjects. Monitoring is suitably conducted by both the ADC and the content subject panels, through formal and informal meetings with the teachers, lesson observation, assignment inspection and review of students' performance. Follow-up measures are duly taken to cater for the needs of students and teachers. For instance, split-class teaching of Mathematics for the S1 class implementing ELA in English has been adopted to create more space for teachers to cater for students' needs in learning Mathematics using English as the MOI. Another example is to set up the English Across the Curriculum (EAC) Focus Group to enhance the cross-curricular collaboration among English, Science and Humanities subject teachers. Lesson observation, with the focus on the learning and teaching effectiveness of using English as the MOI and post-observation sharing, has been duly conducted to better equip teachers with the necessary strategies and skills. On the whole, the evaluation mechanism is effective in helping to inform the school's future planning. The Planning-Implementation-Evaluation process of the WSLP at both the school and subject levels runs smoothly.

3. Learning and Teaching

3.1 Curriculum and Assessment

- For all content subjects, the three classes at each junior secondary level using English as the MOI follow the same curriculum as the class using Chinese as the MOI. Although there may be slight variations in the assignments or the learning tasks, classes using different languages as MOI closely follow the same schedule. While the junior curricula for most content subjects are appropriately set, the school needs to review the content of some subjects to ensure that the level of difficulty of the topics chosen is compatible with the cognitive development of the students and that necessary foundation knowledge and skills are aptly addressed.
- For classes that are adopting Chinese as the MOI, ELA in English are implemented in the form of selected topics taught in English. Due consideration has been given to the selection of ELA topics, based on factors such as language demand, characteristics of certain topics and articulation with senior secondary curricula. Some subject teachers also introduce subject-specific vocabulary items and chapter conclusions in English. Students' performance in the ELA topics is closely monitored by teachers.
- Students are requested by some teachers to consult the dictionary for the meaning of key words before the lessons. Some subject teachers have provided, for each topic, a vocabulary list with Chinese translation, as well as a list of subject-specific expressions for students' reference. In one subject, teachers have suitably highlighted the language focus, such as pronunciation, spelling, and expressions, in the schemes of work to alert teachers to the language needs of students when teaching the topics. As peer support, the English Language panel has supplied a set of common classroom frequently-used commands and question types in English for content subject teachers' reference.
- The implementation of the MOI arrangement is closely monitored at different levels in the school. Relevant evaluation reports are appropriately prepared by different subject panels and presented to the ADC for review and comment. Apart from analysing assessment results, the subject panel chairpersons monitor the MOI implementation through regular meetings, lesson observation and assignment inspection. Questionnaires are also used to collect views from students on different aspects of learning and teaching, and the effectiveness of using English as MOI in learning content subjects is one of the questions included. Follow-up actions have been taken based on evaluation findings. For instance, the number of Science lessons at S2 has been increased from four to five periods per week to enhance the learning of students.

- The school has a clear assessment policy, with due emphasis on both continuous and summative assessments. Different subject panels have the flexibility to determine the form of continuous assessment, which may include worksheets, practical work, news commentaries, reading tasks and class performance. The assignments, generally, show sufficient variation in nature, ranging from the copying of vocabulary items to more structured questions. Instructions are clear and English at an appropriate level has been used in the questions. In the samples of students' assignments submitted for scrutiny, students' performance varies. The more-able students have demonstrated their strength in applying the subject knowledge and expressing themselves concisely with subject-specific language. The less-able, however, often make spelling and grammar mistakes and encounter problems in questions that require higher-order thinking. On the whole, students are relatively weaker in answering open-ended questions and in questions that require elaborate answers. Most teachers can highlight the mistakes made by students and provide useful feedback for improvement. Some teachers praise the students and offer positive reinforcement for their good work. Corrections are usually done by students, with appropriate follow-up by teachers in most cases. Individual teachers have provided very good feedback to the students on the grammar and expression which are conducive to mastering the subject-specific language. Such good practice could be disseminated and shared within and across subject panels.
- The test and examination papers are, on the whole, properly set, with clear instructions and English language at an appropriate level of difficulty. Except for one subject, there is, generally, sufficient variation in the question types. It is good that teachers use a reference chart when setting examination questions, to ensure that sufficient variation in level of difficulty is covered in the examination papers. Students' performance in tests and examinations is analysed and the results of the different classes are discussed in the subject panel meetings to evaluate the quality of assessment papers and identify students' weaknesses. Follow-up measures include organising remedial classes on Saturdays, modifying assignment tasks and using more charts and tables to help students learn in the class. To add value to the review of student performance, the subject panels could make further use of evaluation data to identify the specific language support needed to enhance students' ability to learn the subjects in English.

3.2 Support Measures

- The school endeavours to foster an English-rich learning environment for students. Ample opportunities are provided to enhance students' exposure to English and to encourage their use of the language. On weekly English Speaking Days, students, teachers and office staff are encouraged to use English as the means of communication. Under the school's Air Programme, students

are engaged in news forums, theme talks and book promotion broadcasts through the school's public address system. English Ambassadors from various levels, led by a Native-speaking English teacher, are recruited and trained to help run year-round English activities, such as festive celebrations and English room activities. Students' work is published in the school's annual English magazine, "Wesley Life", and uploaded onto the "Wesley Writers' Platform" to boost students' confidence and recognise their effort. Announcements in annual school events, such as the Athletics Meet and Swimming Gala, are conducted in English. Students are also encouraged to participate actively in external activities, such as the Hong Kong Schools Speech Festival and Scrabble competitions. To enrich the print environment, biblical sayings, famous quotations and students' work are displayed in campus. Some bulletin boards are also used for English display. To build on current practices, the connection between the print displays and content subject learning could be enhanced. To make a closer link between the two, subject-specific vocabulary, sentence patterns and materials related to what students are currently learning could be displayed both inside and outside the classroom.

- Commendable efforts have been made by the school to promote reading. Various measures have been introduced to promote reading across the curriculum. During the bi-weekly English morning reading sessions, students are required to read texts of their own choice and all are given an opportunity to share their thoughts with their classmates on the books they have read. In addition, they are exposed to some content subject-related passages, with follow-up tasks, such as online questions for them to answer. To support the implementation of the WSLP, more content subject-related English titles recommended by content subject teachers are purchased and stocked in both the school and class libraries. The "Wesley Recommended Booklist", which includes teacher recommended books covering various content areas arranged by levels, is updated on a yearly basis. Students, who are required to achieve a certain reading target by reading texts from the list, are given exposure to good quality reading materials. Cross-curricular reading is further promoted and the school librarian collaborates with different subject panels in organising book fairs on different subject themes. Students are requested to submit book reports after reading books recommended in the book fairs. To nurture students' interest in English reading, guest speakers are invited to conduct reading seminars for students. As a follow-up, English teachers give useful advice to students on the applications of the strategies introduced in the seminars.
- An outsourced bridging programme on English and Mathematics is organised during the summer holidays to support the new intake of S1 students, with the aim of arousing their interest in, and laying the basis for, learning of and in English. To provide more useful feedback to inform the subsequent planning of the bridging programme, a more in-depth programme evaluation could be conducted by teachers. Saturday remedial classes on English and Mathematics

are also arranged to help students build a solid foundation in learning. At present, subject-based bridging programmes are provided for S3 students to prepare them for learning content subjects in English in S4, and the school is planning to adopt similar practices to support this year's S3 students. The school could consider the possibility of incorporating content subject elements into the bridging programme for the new intake of S1 students, either during the summer holidays or at the beginning of the academic year, to ensure better adaptation to the change in the MOI. Elements such as classroom language could also be included in the programme.

- There is some collaboration between the English and content subject panels. The EAC Focus Group is formed to facilitate collaboration among subject panels. Besides proofreading content subject assessment papers, English teachers also, on request, give language support on the design of handouts and worksheets. The English, Science and Humanities panels are currently working on content subject unit plans with language focuses in an attempt to initiate curriculum mapping at junior secondary levels. There has been collaboration between the English and content subject panels on occasions such as Science Week and Cultural Week, in running game booths for students, and there will also be pilot collaboration in organising a cross-curricular activity at a particular level among English, Science and Humanities panels in the coming English Festival. After gathering more successful experiences, the school could step up the collaboration between English and content subject panels, especially in the areas related to the promotion of language skills among students.

3.3 Classroom Learning and Teaching

- The school policy on the use of English as the MOI in the content subjects is, generally, adhered to in the classrooms. Teachers' command of English is good. Their presentation, explanation and demonstration are, generally, clear and smoothly accomplished. Lessons are organised with clear objectives. Teachers suitably set the scene for learning, at the beginning of the lessons, by checking students' prior knowledge or revising topics previously taught. Demonstration and learning activities connected to the objectives are arranged to facilitate student learning. Towards the end of the lessons, some teachers give a brief summary to help students consolidate what they have learned. Students, on the whole, are attentive. They are, generally, able to understand the lesson content and follow teachers' instructions to complete the learning tasks. Some students demonstrate self-directed learning strategies, such as pre-lesson preparation, note-taking and the use of the dictionary. Teachers are friendly, responsible and supportive and the learning atmosphere is harmonious. The rapport between teachers and students is, on the whole, very good.
- In some lessons, teachers demonstrate a strong awareness of students' language-related learning needs. For example, teachers properly use visual aids, such as

pictures, photographs, animation and realia, when explaining the lesson content. Reading aloud in chorus and by individual students, and breaking down words into syllables, are adopted to help students master the pronunciation of the subject-specific terms. Teachers rephrase questions or students' responses to encourage more use of subject language and help them grasp the meaning. In order to help students build subject-specific vocabulary and expression, teachers provide opportunities for them to recycle the subject terms and introduce sentence patterns to help them construct their answers in complete sentences. To further enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching, these good practices could be more widely shared within and across subject panels.

- Questioning is quite frequently used to facilitate student learning. Praise is mostly given to recognise students' good performance. In some lessons, teachers ask "why" and "how" questions to encourage students to elaborate answers or express ideas, and timely and concrete feedback is provided to enhance their learning. With teachers' good questioning skills and feedback, students' analytical thinking is provoked and they are able to elaborate their answers in more detail. However, questioning is still used in most lessons to check students' understanding, with inadequate emphasis on stimulating higher-order thinking skills. More follow-up or open-ended questions could be posed to allow students to give more detailed answers. S1 students, generally, respond to teachers' questions in English and some can answer in complete sentences. Nevertheless, students, especially those in S3, are, in general, less confident to answer questions in English. To enhance students' confidence and competence in using English, teachers could guide them to give more elaborate answers. Adequate wait time could also be given to allow students to think and formulate answers.
- In a few lessons, experiments or group discussions are arranged. Teachers mostly walk around to monitor students' learning progress and provide individual support when needed. However, discussion time, pre-task input and guidance given to students are not sufficient. During discussion, most students communicate with their peers in Cantonese. More scaffolding, such as language input and demonstration, could be given before assigning students to discussion tasks. Lessons are, on the whole, teacher-centred. To better align with the school's development focus on "active learning", student-student interaction could be further enhanced to provide more opportunities for them to discuss or express ideas with their peers in English.

4. Way Forward

The school has formulated its WSLP with adequate transparency and clear objectives, taking into account the students' ability, parents' expectations, teachers' readiness and the vertical coherence of the junior and senior secondary curricula. Consensus on the WSLP has been built among teachers, who have a clear understanding of the WSLP and are supportive of the school's MOI arrangements. To align with the implementation of the WSLP, the related school's major concerns have been suitably formulated in the recent two SDP cycles. Due emphasis has been given, through professional sharing, to enhancing teachers' capacity in teaching strategies. Good effort has been put into fostering an English-rich learning environment for students. Various measures are introduced to promote reading across the curriculum. Teachers are capable of delivering the lesson content smoothly in English. Some of them exhibit effective teaching strategies to address the language learning needs of students in the classroom. Students, on the whole, are attentive. They are, generally, able to understand the lesson content and follow teachers' instructions to complete the learning tasks.

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

4.1 Making continuous improvement to classroom learning and teaching

- To further enhance students' ability and confidence in using English to learn, more opportunities could be provided for them to discuss or express ideas with their peers in English. More scaffolding in the form of language input, practice and demonstration could be given to help students build up their confidence in speaking English and vocabulary acquisition. Teachers could guide students to give more elaborate answers. More follow-up or open-ended questions could be posed to allow students' to give more detailed answers. Adequate wait time could also be given to allow students to think and formulate answers.

4.2 Further strengthening cross-curricular collaboration

- The EAC Focus Group is formed to enhance cross-curricular collaboration. Currently, there is some collaboration between the English and content subject panels. To build on this, further development of curriculum mapping across subjects, in areas related to the promotion of language skills among students in particular, could be explored. To better address students' language support needs, more sharing of effective strategies and good practices could be arranged across subject panels.