



Inspection Report

On Focus Inspection

Shaukiwan Tsung Tsin School

Address of School: 3 Basel Road, Shaukiwan

Inspection Period: 14, 15 & 17 December 2009

**Quality Assurance Division
Education Bureau**

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1. Inspection Methodology

- The focus inspection was conducted by Mrs Olivia TO and Ms Liza LO on 14, 15 and 17 December 2009 to evaluate the development of the English Language Education KLA in the school.
- The inspectors employed the following methods to understand the situation of the school:
 - Observation of 10 lessons taught by 11 English teachers;
 - Meetings with the Headmistress, panel chairpersons, teachers and students;
 - Scrutiny of documents and information provided by the school;
 - Scrutiny of samples of students' work and examination papers;
 - Visit to the School Library, English Room, and English Resource Room; and
 - Observation of school activities such as English Drama and "Embassador Scheme".
- The inspection findings presented in this report were derived from the corporate judgment of the inspection team based on the information collected through the above methods.

2. Learning and Teaching

2.1 Student Performance

- The overall performance of students in English Language is satisfactory. Students' listening and reading skills are comparatively better than their speaking and writing skills. Students at Key Stage (KS) 1 are able to understand and respond to simple formulaic expressions and are more willing to use English to interact with their peers and communicate with the teacher. There is a wider range of abilities at KS2, with the less able students exhibiting difficulties in expressing themselves, and the more able demonstrating ability to express opinions and ideas with fluency and confidence.
- Students are well-behaved and willing to learn. They are attentive and participate fully in learning activities. In completing assignments, some students are able to finish their work seriously. Others, especially the average ones, tend to make quite a number of grammatical mistakes that could possibly be avoided through self-checking or peer correction.
- Students enjoy participating in English-related activities, such as the English Speaking Day, "Out-class Activities" and English Drama, and gain valuable learning experiences. Some students are selected to take part in the Hong Kong Schools Speech Festival and are able to achieve encouraging results.

2.2 Quality of Learning and Teaching

- The school understands very well the needs and abilities of its students and has aptly set the goal of enhancing English Language learning as one of the major concerns in the 2009/10 – 2011/12 School Development Plan (SDP). The English Programme Plan aligns with the SDP in addressing the major concern by outlining the focuses for curriculum planning and suggesting practical strategies for improving learning and teaching. Led by responsible and open-minded panel chairpersons with intensive support from experienced English teachers serving as core members, the English panel has set clear directions for subject development. It devises practical plans for curriculum implementation, with a high degree of responsiveness in the process. To enhance students' interest in learning English, the panel replaced textbooks with a story-book reading programme in Primary 1 and 2 some years ago and, after receiving positive feedback from teachers and students, the programme has been extended to Primary 3 in 2009/10. The teaching of language items in the context of a story provides opportunities for students to learn language structures and vocabulary meaningfully and the integration of language activities, such as reading aloud, role-play and singing, help students internalise language items through reiteration and continued exposure. To help students memorise better the pronunciation and spelling of English words, a school-based phonics programme has, for some years, been implemented at all levels.

Realising that the school-based programme has not had a prominent impact among students, the English panel has introduced a new phonics programme in Primary 1 this year and additional lessons have been allocated for trying it out. Understanding that the students perform less satisfactorily in speaking and writing, the school has started to include individual presentation in the English lessons to strengthen students' speaking skills and enhance their confidence. While efforts have been made to strengthen students' phonics and speaking skills, the panel may also consider developing a long-term plan to strengthen their writing.

- Realising the diversity in student abilities, the panel has put in place appropriate measures to cater for differing learning needs. Additional classes are operated in Primary 2 and 4, using the school's own resources, to enhance teaching effectiveness in the subject. There are withdrawal lessons for Primary 6 and after-school remedial classes for Primary 2 to 5. Consultation sessions are arranged for students to clarify their problems in learning English with their subject teachers. Enrichment classes have also been provided for more able students to stretch their abilities in English.
- The school has created a language-rich environment to enhance learning. The English Room offers students a stimulating, print-rich and informative environment for reading sessions. The school library is furnished with a variety of English books and provides students with a pleasant reading environment. The corridors outside the classrooms have been decorated as learning walls where students' works are displayed, both to enhance student confidence and to serve as a platform for them to share their ideas and good work. To further strengthen student learning, word walls could be provided in the classrooms, the corridors or the playground to reinforce what students have learned in their phonics programmes, or to extend their vocabulary on a similar theme to the stories recently taught. A self-learning corner has been set up in Primary 1 and 2 classes for students to work on independent learning activities, if they have completed their assigned work. However, students are not frequently engaged in such activities and it is recommended that such provision be fully utilised to help learners achieve self-directed learning.
- The school has flexibly organised different learning activities and deployed its resources to extend students' learning experiences. The monthly English Speaking Day, the "Embassador Scheme" and "Out-class Activities" are purposefully introduced to increase student exposure and to provide them with more opportunities to communicate in English in real life, through visits to theme parks, fast food shops and restaurants. The Native-speaking English Teacher (NET) works with Primary 2 and 3 students on the reading and phonics programmes, and with Primary 6 students in the Interview session. The NET also acts as a resource person, takes part in collaborative lesson preparation with local English teachers and conducts drama activities for students.
- The assignment and assessment policies are clear, with relevant details stipulated in the Teachers' Handbook. Both the quantity and frequency of assignments are appropriate. A variety of homework, including workbooks, online reading and exercises and graded worksheets, is arranged to consolidate

students' learning. Lesson preparation and proofreading worksheets are designed for all levels to develop students' self-learning skills. Dictation is properly employed as a form of continuous assessment. Assignments are, on the whole, conscientiously marked with students' corrections closely monitored.

- Different assessment activities are arranged at the end of each unit to inform learning and teaching. Summative assessment, including a test and an examination for each term, is suitably adopted to assess students' learning performance. Assessment papers are generally set in appropriate contexts, with the inclusion of some open-ended questions to encourage students' free expression of ideas. A vetting mechanism is suitably in place to ensure balanced coverage of the four skills, the contextualisation of the testing items and the overall quality of the assessment papers.
- Curriculum monitoring has been achieved through regular exercise book inspection, collaborative lesson preparation, peer lesson observation, lesson study and annual lesson observation for appraisal purposes. A proper mechanism for curriculum evaluation is also in place. This includes discussion of the effectiveness of different curriculum initiatives, involving all members of the panel through meetings or informal discussions. Efforts have been made to use internal and external assessment data to inform curriculum planning and to adapt teaching strategies. Student performance is discussed in panel meetings, with remedial measures shared among all the panel members. To make better use of assessment data, attention should be paid to analysing the data with more reference to the reasons for students' deficiencies, formulating more specific measures to improve student learning and recording relevant information systematically as a reference for curriculum or lesson planning.
- There is close collaboration among members and effective communication across levels is maintained through the level-coordinators. Teachers are conscientious and adopt new approaches in teaching to cater for the learning styles of their learners. Realising that students are easily distracted, they adopt a specific set of classroom management strategies, learned through the internet, to effectively focus student attention in English lessons. The sharing culture among teachers is also strong. Effective teaching strategies are demonstrated for professional sharing and for coaching new teachers.
- On the whole, teachers are approachable, supportive and committed to teaching. They have a good command of English and can use it effectively as the medium of instruction. Lessons are generally well prepared with clear focuses and appropriate teaching strategies. This is a result of joint efforts made in collaborative lesson preparation. Lessons are conducted at an appropriate pace, with clear instructions and expositions. Teaching resources, such as pictures, visualisers, video clips and PowerPoint slides, are effectively used to stimulate students' interest, sustain learner attention and facilitate classroom interaction. Most of the teachers share the learning objectives with students at the beginning of the lesson and highlight the gist at its conclusion. Students demonstrate a positive learning attitude and participate in activities with interest and enthusiasm. They are responsive to teachers' questions and instructions and display the knowledge and skills required in completing the assigned tasks.

Teacher-student rapport is good, resulting in a harmonious learning atmosphere in the classroom.

- A majority of the teachers adopts a variety of learning activities, such as singing, reading aloud, miming and pair or group work, to cater for diverse learning styles. Students are used to working in groups and they collaborate with their peers to complete tasks such as conducting discussion and writing on assigned topics. A few teachers have provided students with choices in the course of completing their tasks. Most of the teachers demonstrate good questioning skills. Apart from checking understanding, they ask a range of questions, some of which allow students to express ideas and justify their answers. Some teachers have also succeeded in promoting students' higher order thinking skills by asking probing questions. Concrete feedback is often provided to students to consolidate their learning.
- Junior students demonstrate basic knowledge of letter-sound relationships and are able to work out the pronunciation of monosyllabic words in the phonics session. It is recommended that the teaching of phonics be further reinforced and integrated with regular teaching, especially when students are learning new vocabulary. To address students' lack of confidence in speaking, teachers offer ample opportunities for individual presentation, on topics such as weather, and in reporting on discussions. As a result, some students are quite confident in making presentations, with accurate pronunciation and proper intonation. To achieve greater impact, teachers are encouraged to provide, in their daily teaching time, opportunities for students to develop their speaking skills. This could be done through a variety of activities, with purposeful speaking integrated in the lesson. Owing to the abilities of students, writing tasks are usually conducted with a considerable amount of support or guidance. Integrated learning tasks with a writing section can provide students with opportunities to use language for authentic purposes. More challenging tasks, such as conducting projects that involve the use of different language structures, could be designed to further stretch the abilities of the more able students.
- Students are encouraged to conduct self-evaluation in some of the lessons and individual teachers provide clear guidance to help students reflect on their learning. Some students use self-learning strategies such as correcting their own mistakes and revising their work. Others are able to work out the meaning of unknown words using contextual clues. Moreover, a few make use of the Word Bank to select suitable vocabulary to complete the task. However, to promote learner independence, more opportunities could be provided to engage students in active learning by helping them acquire and expand their language learning strategies and further foster their self-learning skills.

3. Concluding Remarks

The school has effectively planned its curriculum to suit the needs and abilities of its students and to enhance their interest in learning English. The English panel sets clear directions for curriculum planning and is reflective in utilising resources to support curriculum change. The school has put considerable effort into creating a language-rich environment to foster student learning in a stimulating atmosphere. There is good coordination within the panel and teachers share their experience through collaborative lesson preparation. Lessons are generally well-prepared and a variety of teaching resources is adopted to maintain learner interest and facilitate understanding of the learning content. Students are attentive and willing to take part in learning activities. They perform better in listening and reading but encouraging performance has started to emerge in areas where the school has put in additional resources. These include pronunciation in junior classes and the speaking skills of some of the more able students. To further enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching, the following suggestions could be considered:

- Teachers should make better use of assessment data to analyse students' weaknesses in order to inform curriculum and lesson planning. More specific measures to enhance student learning should be devised and the outcomes should be recorded systematically as a reference for future curriculum and lesson planning and to help the panel evaluate effectiveness.
- In addition to enhancing pronunciation through the school-based phonics programmes and promoting speaking through the use of individual presentation in the regular English lesson, teachers need to integrate phonics and speaking practice within classroom teaching. Phonics can be applied in teaching new vocabulary in reading sessions to help students better memorise the pronunciation and spelling of words. Speaking can be incorporated in various learning activities so that students have more chances to use the target language structures meaningfully in communicating with their classmates.
- Students have started to display an initial grasp of some language learning strategies and self-learning skills. More opportunities could be provided to engage them in active and self-directed learning. The potential of the more able students could also be stretched by providing them with more challenging tasks.