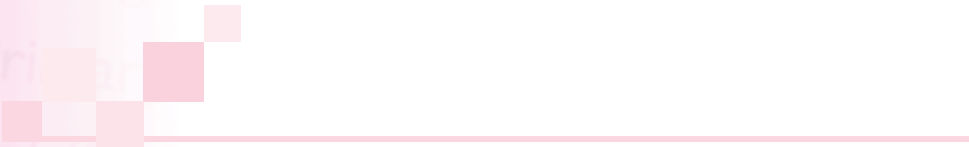GOOD PRACTICES AND
KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Chapter 4
GOOD PRACTICES AND KEY ISSUES IDENTIFIED

4.1 Good Practices Identified

Inspection findings in Chapter Two reveal that the schools inspected displayed obvious strengths in the Domain of Support for Pupils and School Ethos. Good practices were identified in such aspects as pastoral care and extra-curricular activities. Effective implementation of a whole-school approach to pastoral care, comprehensive guidance programmes and a wide range of ECA contributing to all-round education and life-wide learning were observed in some schools. Details of these good practices have already been summarised as the strengths of the respective aspects in Chapter Two. Other than these good practices, commendable performance of individual schools in other aspects would be listed in this section for reference of other schools.

As regards the Domain of Management and Organisation and the Domain of Learning and Teaching, the schools inspected this year in general performed less satisfactorily in specific aspects of work such as school self-evaluation, staff management and curriculum planning and organisation. Yet, individual schools demonstrated commendable practices in these aspects. Even though the good practices of these individual schools could not be generalised to describe the general performance of most schools in Hong Kong, they could serve as good references for schools that need improvement in these areas.

(1)   Theme-based approach to pastoral services

- A theme-based approach to pastoral services was adopted in individual schools. The theme of the year was set after careful analysis of the needs of the pupils, long-term and short-term objectives of pastoral care. Apart from drawing up their year plans according to the school theme, different pastoral teams also cooperated with each other in some activities. Coordination among all the pastoral teams was further improved by the establishment of an overall monitoring committee. Through stronger collaboration and better

communication, all pastoral teams worked in harmony and supported each other in the provision of support services for their pupils.

(2)   Home-School Co-operation

- In individual schools, the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) was formed with a clear structure, and well-defined roles and functions for the sub-committees. Social and educational programmes were organised for both parents and pupils. Communication among parents was enhanced through the PTA homepage. Parents' volunteer support teams helped the schools organise programmes and activities in the areas of remedial support to pupils, lunch arrangements, ECA and guidance services.

(3)   Links with External Organisations

- Some schools were keen to acquire external funds and assistance from tertiary institutions to facilitate the launch of educational initiatives. Through collaborative research projects like the Seed Project, the Cluster Schools Gifted Project or the Accelerated Schools for Quality Education Project, schools worked in partnership with professional bodies to conduct action research or programmes for staff development.

(4)   Cross-curricular Programmes

- Individual schools showed particular strengths in organising cross-curricular programmes. Life education was stressed in both the formal and informal curricula. Pupils were led to reflect on the meaning of life, its challenges and ways to overcome problems in different stages of development. Spiritual education was infused in the formal Religious Education lessons and talks in the assembly. One school was given the Green School Award for organising a wide range of activities on environmental education. Besides, teachers participated in the training, design and try-out of civic education learning materials in a pilot civic education project with a tertiary institution.

(5)   School Self-evaluation

- One school demonstrated very good progress in establishing a systematic SSE mechanism:
  - The school was successful in involving staff of various levels in different

stages of planning and evaluation.

- An SSE committee was organised to coordinate the evaluation work at school, departmental and individual levels.

- Additional funding from the QEF was acquired to support the development of SSE. Expertise from external organisations was sought to help assess the needs of the school, improve the SSE mechanism and develop staff's awareness of SSE, these being indispensable elements leading to the school's success in devising a school-based evaluation mechanism.

- The culture of multi-directional evaluation, including self-appraisal and mutual evaluation between the management staff and teachers, was promoted.

- Annual targets, with appropriate evaluation tools and success criteria, were set according to the school's developmental priorities and needs.

(6)   Staff Management

- A few schools were excellent in devising staff development strategy. They were eager to improve teachers' professional competence by devising an appropriate school-based staff development plan and policy:

  - Apart from encouraging staff to pursue further studies and to attend external training courses, the school management made an agreement with the staff on training targets. The schools had made successful attempts to bring in the support of external organisations such as the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) and the Education Department to build up the professional knowledge base of the teaching staff and to alleviate their perplexities about the education and curriculum reforms. Besides, staff development programmes were aligned with the school's developmental priorities.

  - Joint projects between the school and tertiary institutions were also initiated to conduct action research and to promote experience sharing on peer lesson observation and collaborative teaching.

  - With respect to the support for newly appointed teachers, a good mentoring programme covering all aspects of work in school, such as classroom management skills, teaching strategies and student guidance skills, was put in place. Such a programme successfully helped the new teachers

adapt to the working environment.

-   The staff appraisal system was highly transparent, with clear appraisal procedures and criteria. In addition to using the system for staff promotion, the school further utilised it for staff development.

(7)   Curriculum Planning and Organisation

•   Though schools did not perform very well in the aspect of curriculum planning and organisation and curriculum management, some outstanding practices in the aspect of curriculum planning and organisation were still observed in individual schools. For instance, one school made a good attempt in offering new subjects like AS Music and AS Art as a way to cater for the diverse abilities and needs of their pupils. New curriculum initiatives such as project learning, curriculum integration and use of IT in teaching were accorded high priorities in the school's agenda to develop their pupils' generic skills. Besides, a comprehensive programme covering moral, civic, environmental, health and sex education elements was also in place. Due attention was paid to catering for learner differences. Chinese, English and Mathematics Enhancement Programmes were offered to raise pupils' academic standards. Individual subject teachers also contributed by providing extra coaching for the pupils in need. Commendable efforts were made by a school to design three sets of timetables to cater for the variety and complexity of learning activities.

4.2 Key Issues Identified

In inspection, key issues were identified for schools' action to set directions for the schools' continuous development. A summary of these key issues, in descending order of predominance, is given below:

4.2.1 Management & Organisation

- A systematic **school self-evaluation mechanism**, with appropriate evaluation procedures and criteria, should be established. The evaluation findings should be used to analyse the effectiveness of the work implemented, in order to refine the development plans for continuous improvement.

- To facilitate effective implementation of school projects, strong **middle management teams** should be built. Relevant training should be provided for the middle managers, including heads of subject departments and functional units, to enrich their professional leadership and management skills.

- **Monitoring and co-ordination** among subject departments and functional units should be strengthened so as to ensure the quality of the implementation of the programme plans.

- **Communication channels** between the school management and staff should be better utilised so that views from staff could be considered in formulating the school policies.

- A review of the various initiatives introduced should be conducted so that proper **work priorities** could be set to best match the resources available, the strengths of staff and the needs of pupils.

- A wider **staff participation in decision-making** would be required to help build up a sense of ownership with respect to the school policies, which was conducive to effective implementation of school-based management.

4.2.2 Learning & Teaching

- A greater variety of **learning and teaching strategies** should be adopted to enhance interaction in class. Teachers should organise more learning activities to invite pupils' participation, to help them construct knowledge

and to enhance peer collaboration.

- As regards **curriculum management**, the roles of curriculum leaders, including panel chairpersons, needed to be enhanced. There needed to be better co-ordination among subject departments and functional groups in the implementation of a school-based curriculum. Frequent review and monitoring of the curriculum would be necessary.

- Schools should attach due importance to catering for learner differences in the course of **curriculum planning and organisation**. A well-structured learning support programme was necessary to cater for the needs of the academically less able pupils. School-based adaptations of the central curriculum should be made, appropriate teaching strategies should be adopted and existing resources should be well utilised, to cater for learner differences and enhance the effectiveness of learning. The planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of remedial teaching programmes should be strengthened and programme contents should be revised at regular intervals.

- **Teachers' expectations of their pupils** should be raised to stretch pupils' abilities. Greater importance should be attached to promoting pupils' self-learning and to developing their generic skills such as communication skills, critical thinking skills and creativity.

- Schools should adopt more varied **modes of assignments and assessment** suited to the purposes and processes of learning so as to avoid over-reliance on pen and paper exercises, written tests and examinations.

- Schools should make good **use of assessment information.** Information derived from assessment should be fully utilised to improve learning and teaching. Such information could serve to identify pupils' learning problems and help solve them, as well as monitor pupils' learning outcomes. The information could also give feedback on curriculum designs, teaching plans, effectiveness of teaching strategies and assessment methods.

4.2.3 Support for Pupils & School Ethos

The performance of schools was quite good in this Domain. Building on the existing strengths, school can make improvement in the following aspects in order to further enhance school performance:

- Regarding **caring services** for pupils with special educational needs, schools should establish a proper mechanism for identifying pupils with special educational needs. Apart from providing sufficient training to teachers, greater flexibility in administration procedures, teaching plans, or examination methods should be considered when addressing individual problems of these pupils. Support to these pupils should be rendered in collaboration with parents and external organisations.

- An effective **mechanism for monitoring and evaluating** guidance services, cross-curricular programmes or supportive services for newly arrived children should be established.