

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

### **The background**

1.1 In September 1996, the Student Discipline Section was set up to provide support for schools on matters relating to student discipline, in accordance with the Governor's Policy Address 1995. In the first year of operation, the Section was served by 10 professional and 4 general grade staff. The services range from school-based programmes such as consultation and teachers' training workshops to off-site support in the form of seminars, network meetings and so forth. Each year the Section will offer intensive and general professional support to about 100 secondary schools. A detailed description of the services is in Appendix I. On the whole, the mode, the nature and the quality of the service delivered were well received by the schools.

### **The purpose of writing the Guidelines**

1.2 In addition to the services mentioned above, the Section sees the need to prepare a set of suggested guidelines for teachers, in particular, those responsible for student discipline work. Unlike many other professionals such as doctors who use stethoscopes, accountants who use calculators, and architects who use drawing boards, teachers and other people involved in the helping profession are unique as they use themselves as the primary instrument for relationship building to facilitate learning and changed to take place. Therefore, it is very important to prepare a set of guidelines as a framework for the practice of student discipline at school. The objectives of writing these guidelines are threefold:

- To strengthen the discipline teachers' understanding of the basic principles in the management of students' behaviour;
- To enable them to master their skills in this area of work;
- To facilitate them to share with their colleagues the effects of positive practices so that they could work with concerted efforts in the management of students' behaviour and to set the stage for adopting a Whole School Approach to Discipline.

## **The approach**

1.3 In preparing these guidelines for schools on student discipline, we were very tempted to write an ABC type of cookbook manual but we finally decided to take a more difficult route. While an ABC how-to-do-it manual may be useful in the short run, we feel that schools would be better served by knowing the basic principles, the attitudes and the practices of most teachers. On the other hand, we would also like teachers to discover more about their own attitudes and practices through reading these guidelines. Therefore apart from incorporating some basic information here, we hope that the reading would be active, reflective and generative. In the course of our collaboration with schools in the past two years, we managed to make some valuable observations about students' behaviour and the positive discipline practice adopted by schools. Therefore we are also prepared to share with our teachers and readers our observations.

## **Summary**

- \* The Student Discipline Section was set up in September 1996 with the objective to provide support for schools on student discipline matters.
- \* Teachers themselves are the primary vehicle for learning and change; these guidelines aim at encouraging teachers to make concerted efforts in the management of students' behaviour and to work towards a Whole School Approach to Student Discipline.
- \* This is an interactive guide for discipline teachers with a view to helping them understand their own attitude and thinking, master the skills and support their colleagues in student discipline work.