

# **Opening Ceremonies for new and remodeled School Buildings**

**A guide for Board of Trustees**

## **YOUR SCHOOL'S IMAGE**

The image of your school should never be left to chance --- it should be the result of a carefully planned programme. The most obvious, yet most vital step towards ensuring a positive lasting impression happens at the first point of contact with the school. The initial impression gained by a parent, student or visitor is perhaps the most lasting it will often determine their future enthusiasm, commitment, involvement and the image of the school they communicate to others.

An official opening is a wonderful opportunity to present a positive view of your school to the local community and an ideal basis from which to build your public relations programme in years to come.

For further information about School Openings, please contact your Schools Property Co-ordinator, Sarita Smit.

## **1. Introduction**

This booklet provides guidelines for organising an official opening of remodelled school facilities. Please read it carefully, taking note of the many variables that can occur that are not always anticipated, but can be planned for.

A checklist is provided at the end of this section to assist in your planning.

## **2. Committee**

It is recommended that a small committee be formed to organise the school opening.

## **3. Timing**

Carefully plan the time of year for the opening, keeping weather conditions in mind. If the opening is to be held outside, it is important to have a fall-back arrangement in case of bad weather, or during the summer months, if the weather is very hot. This could be the school hall, classroom, or possibly a marquee. A weekend opening may allow more of the community to attend. However, some schools do find that an opening during school hours is also very attractive to the school community.

Schools should contact the Proprietor and their Schools Property Co-ordinator *three months prior* to the proposed ceremony.

## **4. Official Party Invitations**

The blessing of the building should be done by the Bishop of the Diocese (or his nominee), with the Archbishop (or nominee) officiating for the Wellington Archdiocese.

The Proprietor (or representative) should, in most instances, officially open the school.

The Bishop should be contacted and invited at least two months prior to the opening.

Once a date and time has been confirmed with the Bishop and the Proprietor, a formal invitation should be sent to the Bishop, Archbishop, the Proprietor and Schools Property Team at the same time.

## **5. Roles at Opening Ceremony**

Appoint a Master of Ceremonies- this person, often the Board Chair, welcomes guests and introduces speakers.

Appoint someone, usually the Principal, to thank those who carried out the opening and blessing.

## **6. Checklist for Notification of Opening Ceremonies**

- School contacts their Schools Property Co-ordinator at least three months in advance of the proposed date
- School checks the availability of the Bishop/Archbishop and the Proprietor on the chosen date.
- School confirms, in writing, the date and time to their Schools Property Co-ordinator
- At the same time, school sends an initial letter of invitation to the Proprietor and the Bishop/Archbishop (Appendix A)
- School sends official invitations to the Bishop/Archbishop, Proprietor, School Property Co-ordinator at the appropriate juncture (Appendix B)

## **7. Invited Guests**

The following list may be used as a guide.

### ***Official Party:***

- The Bishop/Archbishop of the Diocese
- Proprietor (if not the Bishop)
- School's Property Team
- Master of Ceremonies
- BOT Chair (if s/he is not the MC)
- School Principal

### ***Guests:***

- Neighbouring Parish Priests
- Local Government (Mayor)
- Local MP
- Director/ Manager of Diocesan CEC
- If relevant, Congregation Leader of Religious Order
- Board members/Parish Council members
- Parents & Friends' Association members
- Architect
- Builder, Schools Project Manager, Schools Property Co-ordinator and Quantity Surveyor.
- All parents of children at the school
- Principals of surrounding schools (as appropriate)
- State school Principals of surrounding schools (as appropriate)
- Past Principals

Formal invitations should be sent to official party and invited guests. Consideration should then be given as to how parents and the wider community are to be invited - via newsletter, circular, newspaper advertisements.

## **8. Speakers**

Knowledge of the school and good public speaking skills are important in selecting the Master of Ceremonies. As a general rule, the number of speakers should not exceed the following:

- MC (welcome and introduction)
- Bishop/Archbishop of Diocese (blessing) - usually the Bishop/Archbishop will also say a few words if it is not a Diocesan School
- Proprietor
- BOT Chair (if s/he is not the MC)
- School Principal (thanks and closing)

## **9. Programme**

The invitation programme should be finalised as soon as final acceptances are received from the official party. Allow sufficient time for printing. The opening ceremony should contain a liturgical section.

Generally, the programme is as follows:

1. Arrival of official party and invited guests
2. MC welcome ( BoT Chair)
3. Address: Proprietor
4. Archbishop/Bishop goes to each room for the blessing  
During this time the ceremony continues with (for example) student readings, hymns, school choir.
5. Address: Archbishop/Bishop (If Bishop is Proprietor this takes place at 3 above)
6. Official opening and handover of buildings to BoT (Bishop/Archbishop)
7. Address of thanks (Principal)
8. Buildings open for inspection
9. Morning/afternoon tea

## **10 Introductions and Starting Time**

Allow guests a short space of time for introductions and informal talk prior to the opening ceremony. Begin the ceremony on time, unless an important guest/speaker has not arrived.

## **11. Plaque**

Often a plaque is to be blessed and placed on the building. The plaque for the official opening should be ordered well in advance and will contain the following information:

- School name
- Name of person who conducted official opening
- Date of opening
- Acknowledgment of architect/builder (see Appendix C for example)

A bronze plaque is recommended for the best outdoor/low maintenance. It should measure 30cm x 20cm, have block lettering and include screws to attach.

Polished brass plaques need regular polishing.

Plaque stands (with unveiling curtain) are useful as the plaque is heavy to hold. The plaque should be on display after the opening.

## **12. Seating Arrangements**

Organise seating arrangements for the official guests and others well in advance. "Reserved" signs or names on chairs is always helpful.

## **13. Cleaning**

A working bee organised prior to the opening will help to ensure the school is thoroughly clean, internally and externally.

## **14. Media Coverage**

It is the usual practice for CSBL to arrange press releases for school openings in conjunction with the school and BoT. Schools are invited to make contact with CSBL to discuss media coverage.

## **CHECKLIST**

- Committee formed to plan the opening.
- Date and time of opening to be considered - does an alternative venue need to be considered in case of wet, or very hot weather?
- Phone call made to ascertain Archbishop/Bishop availability for opening date.
- Phone call made to ascertain the Proprietors availability.
- Phone call made to ADW confirming date of opening at least three months prior to opening.
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- Letter of invitation sent to the official party.
- Speakers nominated - Master of Ceremonies, Address of Thanks.
- Guest list drawn up - invitations printed and sent. Check to see whether the following should be invited:
- Neighbouring Parish Priests
  - Local MP
  - Local Government (Mayor)
  - Diocese
  - If relevant, Congregation Leader of Religious Order
  - Board members/Parish Council members
  - Parents & Friends' Association members
  - Architect
  - Builder
  - Member(s) of the Planning and Development Team including Project Manager, Schools Property Co-ordinator
  - All parents of children at the school
  - Principals of surrounding schools (as appropriate)
  - State school Principals in surrounding schools (as appropriate)
  - Past Principals
- Notice of school opening published via newsletter.
- Briefing of Proprietor, MC and other speaker's
- Group of staff or students appointed to look after official party and invited guests.
- Rehearsal of ushering guests from car park to seating area.
- Programme of opening finalised and printed.
- Engravers contacted with details of plaque -- is a plaque stand necessary?
- Working bee organised to clean and tidy school.
- Catering organised. Are there enough people to help serve the food and clean up afterwards? Is there enough equipment?
- Seating arrangements finalised - seats named - enough chairs?

**APPENDIX A:  
LETTER OF INVITATION TO DIRECTOR/BISHOP**

<Date>

The Most Reverend < ..... >  
Archbishop/ Bishop of < .....>  
Proprietor  
Address  
CITY

Dear Bishop < .....>

On behalf of the <school name> community, I wish to invite you to participate in the official opening of the recently completed building project at <school name>. The opening will take place on <day and time>.

It would be appreciated if your availability to attend the opening could be confirmed.

Yours sincerely

< .....>  
Principal

**APPENDIX B:  
FORMAL INVITATION**

*The Proprietor <Archbishop/ Bishop> and <School/College name> Board are pleased  
to invite*

.....

*to the  
Blessing and Official Opening of <School Name/ buildings>*

*by the  
<Name of Archbishop or Bishop as appropriate>*

*Archbishop/Bishop of <Diocese>*

*on*

*<date>*

*at <time>*

*The ceremony will take place in the <place>  
- afternoon tea will follow.*

*RSVP <Date>*

*Phone:*

*<address>*

**APPENDIX C:  
PLAQUE**

<NAME OF SCHOOL

STAGE>

OFFICIALLY OPENED ON .....

BY

AND BLESSED BY

THE MOST REVEREND .....

<ARCHBISHOP/BISHOP> OF <DIOCESE>

ARCHITECT  
<name>

BUILDER  
<name>