



ARCHDIOCESE OF WELLINGTON

Opening Ceremonies for New and Remodelled School Buildings

A Guide for Boards

YOUR SCHOOL'S IMAGE

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. 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.

For further information about School or School Building/s Openings, please contact:

- Kelly Ross, Vicar for Education, k.ross@wn.catholic.org.nz or
- Koa Martel, Property Manager, k.martel@wn.catholic.org.nz

1. Introduction

- This booklet provides guidelines for organising an official opening of new and 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 and/or blessing of new or re-modelled classrooms.

3. Timing

- Carefully plan the time of year for the opening/blessing, keeping weather conditions in mind. If the opening/blessing 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/blessing during school hours is also very attractive to the school community.
- Schools should contact Kelly Ross, Vicar for Education, *two months prior* to the proposed ceremony.
- However, as your Proprietor is Archbishop Paul Martin, it will be essential to establish his availability first and then plan accordingly.

4. Official Notifications

- The **blessing** of the building should be done by the Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Wellington (or his nominee), with the Archbishop (or nominee) officiating for the Wellington Archdiocese.
- As the Proprietor, the Archbishop (or his nominee) will also **officially open the school or building/s**.
- Once a date and time has been confirmed with the Archbishop, the school can send out formal invitations.

5. Roles at Opening Ceremony

- Appoint a Master of Ceremonies. This person, often the Board Presiding Member, 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 Kelly Ross, Vicar for Education, at least two months in advance of the proposed date
- ☐ School checks the availability of the Archbishop via the Vicar for Education
- ☐ School sends an initial letter of invitation to the Archbishop (Appendix A)
- ☐ School sends official invitation to the Archbishop, the Vicar for Education, and Property Manager at ADW (Appendix B)

7. Invited Guests

The following list may be used as a guide. It may vary, depending on whether the opening is of a new building and/or re-modelled buildings.

Official Party:

- The Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Wellington
- Vicar for Education
- Property Manager
- Parish Priest
- Mana Whenua
- Master of Ceremonies
- Presiding Member of the Board (if s/he is not the MC)
- School Principal

Guests:

- School community
- Neighbouring Parish Priests
- Local Government (Mayor)
- Local MP
- If relevant, Congregation Leader of Religious Order
- Parish Team members
- Board members
- Parents & Friends' Association members
- Architect and Builder
- Principals of surrounding schools (as appropriate)
- State School Principals of surrounding schools (as appropriate)
- Past Principals

Formal invitations should be sent to the 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, etc.

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)
- Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Wellington (opening prayer, blessing of buildings)
- Presiding Member (if s/he is not the MC)
- Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Wellington (final blessing)
- School Principal (thanks and invite to hospitality)

9. Arrival of Guests

Appoint a group of staff or senior students specifically to look after the invited guests. The official party should be met by the Principal and Presiding Member. It is useful to have names on seats for special guests. Arrange selected students to meet other visitors and parents and show them to the ceremony area. It is wise to plan and rehearse the ushering of guests from the car park to the seating area with the designated students.

10. Programme

The 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 (Presiding Member)
3. Archbishop – opening prayer
4. Readings and Prayers of the Faithful
5. Address: Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Wellington
6. Archbishop goes to each room for the blessing
7. During this time the ceremony continues with (for example) student hymns, school choir.
8. Address: Archbishop (if Archbishop is Proprietor this takes place at 3 above)
9. Presiding Member
10. Official opening and handover of buildings to Presiding Member (Archbishop)
11. Archbishop – final blessing
12. Address of thanks (Principal)
13. Buildings open for inspection by guest and parents

14. Morning/afternoon tea/celebration/hospitality

11. 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.

12. 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

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.

Brass plaques require 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.

13. Equipment Hire

Equipment to be hired could include the following:

Chairs	Staging	Marquee
Plants	Tables, trestles	Urns
Crockery	Cutlery	Plaque stand
Microphones (test in advance)		

It is important to make the ceremony area as attractive as possible with plants, seating, etc. The placement of the staging is also important and should not be situated in a windy, exposed spot, near toilets or in a dimly-lit area.

14. Seating Arrangements

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

15. Catering

Catering will depend on the type of after-ceremony function held. Consider whether coffee, tea and biscuits or a 'full' morning or afternoon tea or lunch is appropriate. Nominate a body of people to organise the catering. Ensure that there are enough people to help prepare the food, serve, and clean up afterwards. Also ensure equipment is adequate.

16. Parking

Plan the parking of cars for official and other guests. Parents should be informed well in advance where they should park on the day. Guest parking bays should be marked clearly.

17. Cleaning

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

18. Media Coverage

It is the usual practice for ADW to arrange press releases for school openings in conjunction with the school and Presiding Member. Schools are invited to contact ADW Communications Advisor, Ben Mack, at b.mack@wn.catholic.org.nz to discuss media coverage.

A photographer should be identified by the school to take photos during the opening/blessing. These photos will then be shared with ADW via Ben Mack.

Schools are to ensure that all persons/students in photos give permission for their image to be shared.

20. Briefing

ADW can provide background details about the school and prepare briefing notes for the Archbishop. The Presiding Member and Principal will be consulted. The school is responsible for ensuring that all official and invited guests receive a copy of the programme prior to the official opening. They should be given advice where to report and details for parking as well.

21. After the Ceremony

The official party should be escorted to the refreshment area. Encourage Board members to mix with the official guests and parents.

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's availability for opening date
- ☐ Letter of invitation sent to the Archbishop via the Vicar for Education
- ☐ Sent formal invitations to Archbishop, Vicar for Education, Mana Whenua and ADW Property Manager
- ☐ 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)
 - Congregation Leader of Religious Order (if relevant)
 - Parish Team members
 - Board members
 - Parents & Friends' Association members
 - Architect
 - Builder
 - School Project Manager
 - Principals of surrounding schools/colleges (as appropriate)
 - State School Principals in surrounding schools/colleges (as appropriate)
 - Past Principals
- ☐ Notice of school opening published via newsletter
- ☐ Briefing of Archbishop, MC and other speakers
- ☐ 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?
- ☐ Hiring of extra equipment organised - consider the following:
 - Chairs
 - Microphones (test in advance)
 - Staging
 - Marquee
 - Plants
 - Tables, trestles
 - Urns
 - Crockery
 - Cutlery

- Plaque stand
- ☐ Working bee organised to clean and tidy school
 - ☐ Ben Mack at ADW contacted to discuss background details and media coverage
 - ☐ Parking organised for official party, guests, and others
 - ☐ Catering organised. Are there enough people to help serve the food and clean up afterwards? Is there enough equipment?
 - ☐ Seating arrangements finalised, with seats named and a sufficient number of chairs

APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INVITATION TO ARCHBISHOP

<Date>

Archbishop Paul Martin sm
Proprietor
<Address>
<CITY>

Dear Archbishop Paul,

On behalf of the <school name> community, I thank you for agreeing to officially open and bless the recently completed building project at <school name>. The opening will take place on <day and time>.

We look forward to celebrating the occasion with you.

Yours sincerely

<>
Principal

APPENDIX B: FORMAL INVITATION

The Proprietor, <Archbishop Paul Martin sm,> and <School/College name>

Board are pleased to invite

.....

to the

Blessing and Official Opening of <School Name/ buildings>

by the

<Name of Archbishop as appropriate>

Archbishop of <Diocese>

on

<date>

at <time>

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

RSVP <Date>

<address>

Phone:

APPENDIX C: PLAQUE

<NAME OF SCHOOL

STAGE>

OFFICIALLY OPENED ON

BY

AND BLESSED BY

<ARCHBISHOP> OF <WELLINGTON>

ARCHITECT
<name>

BUILDER
<name>