

ORGANISING YOUR CELEBRATION EVENT

Key tips

- Before making firm arrangements, check what budget is available and what costs will be involved.
- Make sure key players, including relevant county councillors (your local representative or the Executive Member for Education and Skills, Chris Hayward) will be available before deciding the date.
- Prepare the guest list and send invitations well in advance so guests have the date in their diaries in good time.
- Send a map with the invitations showing where the venue is located and indicating where guests can park.
- If you plan to use any technology for presentations (microphones, power point projectors, etc) ensure someone is responsible for checking that it works – beforehand and on the day. Also ensure practical arrangements are in place for things like ribbon cutting, plaque unveiling and so on.
- Issue your school press release using the template provided with this pack to publicise the event to the local community.
- Remember to take into account the needs of people who have disabilities or who cannot read or speak English.
- When events result from partnerships or joint working, involve the agencies concerned in both the planning and the event.
- Take photographs so that the event is captured for school newsletters, follow-up press releases and other uses.

Be clear about what you want to achieve

The official opening of your school's new build is a good way to:

1. announce the details of the project to the local community
2. celebrate success
3. involve local people and organisations in your school community
4. promote the school positively in the local media

The guest list

- Chief and Senior Officers - can be invited to take the lead/represent the council if the appropriate county councillor is not available to do so (for example, Director of Education – Justin Donovan; Chief Executive – John Wood).
- Community representatives/project partners - you may want to invite representatives of relevant borough, district, town or parish councils, other agencies and voluntary organisations. Consult their officers to find out who to invite. When events result from partnerships or joint working consult the relevant agency/organisation to ask who to invite.
- Celebrities – while it can attract media and public interest if a national or local celebrity launches your event it can also be costly. Some celebrities charge fees or expect their expenses to be covered. If you are able to interest a celebrity in your event, you should still invite the relevant county councillor and check that they would be happy with this.

Venue

- Check that the venue will safely and comfortably hold all the people attending – before you finalise the guest list. Make sure there are sufficient seats and toilets (including disabled), the heating and ventilation is adequate and there are enough power points for any equipment needed.
- Look at the car parking facilities. You will need to reserve places close to the building for disabled guests and speakers. If there are likely to be more guests than parking spaces, find out where the nearest available parking facilities are so that you can include the information with the invitation.

Planning and preparation

- Plan the format carefully and decide who will be responsible for each aspect of the event. Draw up a clear running order, with timings for each part of the proceedings.
- Refreshments – think about whether you would like to offer tea and coffee, soft drinks, a celebration cake.
- Exhibitions and displays - make sure there is sufficient space available. Allow time beforehand to produce them and time on the day to assemble/dismantle them. Consider what sort of backdrop is needed for speakers, especially if photographs are being taken.
- Greeting guests - delegate people to welcome them, guide them to where they need to be and offer refreshments.