

New South Wales Government



Department of Education



MEMORANDUM TO PRINCIPALS

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GUIDELINES - OFFICIAL VISITORS AT SCHOOL FUNCTIONS

With the State Election pending, Principals may anticipate requests from Members of Parliament, local candidates and other people anxious to visit schools and take part in school functions. In order to avoid potentially embarrassing situations for Principals, it is timely to re-state the following guidelines regarding protocol for school functions.

1. All invitations are at the discretion of the School Principal (for certain functions Ministerial prerogative operates - see below).

2. Visits by Local Members of Parliament

Principals should expect that Local Members of Parliament (both State and Federal) will take an active interest in schools in their electorates. The Principal may anticipate visits by the local Member on a number of occasions throughout the year, either by invitation (for formal visits) or more informally, without the Principal having issued an express invitation. Where possible, however, Principals should be informed of any visit so that mutually inconvenient visits may be avoided.

Local Members of Parliament (whether in the Government or Opposition) should be assured of a warm welcome whenever they visit schools in their own electorates.

3. Visits by Other Members of Parliament

In the case of visits to schools by any Member of State or Federal Parliament other than the local Member, the usual and expected practice is that the Member makes the arrangements through the Minister's Office, or at least with the Minister's concurrence.

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In order to ensure that the correct protocol is observed, the Principal should immediately contact the District Inspector or the Regional Director when receiving notice of an uninvited visit by a Member of Parliament other than the local Member. At all times such visits should be at the convenience of the school and it may be necessary for the Principal to suggest another more appropriate time.

Visits by candidates for parliamentary office will, in most cases, be handled in a similar fashion.

4. Precedence of Elected Officials at Official Functions

- (i) The State Minister of Education has precedence over all others except the Premier or Vice-Regal representatives.
- (ii) Members of State Parliament take precedence over members of Federal Parliament.
- (iii) Members of Parliament take precedence over Local Government representatives.
- (iv) Elected representatives take precedence over appointed officials.

Courtesies should always be extended to elected officials (e.g. Members of Legislative Council) who indicate they will attend a function but they should only be invited to join the official party if appropriate, and at the Principal's discretion.

5. Speech/Prize Days

These are viewed as essentially local celebrations and the Minister's Office need not be informed. Invitations may be issued to Members of Parliament and other local dignitaries, but Principals are reminded that the official party:

- (i) should generally consist only of those who are going to speak at the function (with their spouses/partners);
- (ii) should be kept as small as is practicable;
- (iii) should be seated on the dais and should be advised of the seating arrangements in advance. (If necessary for some members to be seated off the dais, this should be stated.) Usual seating protocol should be followed (refer to booklet from Community Relations Unit) and requests for variation should be dealt with circumspectly.

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6. Speeches

As a general guideline, no school function should be so long as to tax the patience of the children or adults. Despite the desire of the organisers of any function and the speakers themselves that their opportunity to participate should not be curtailed, the following principles should be followed in relation to those invited to speak at official school functions:

- (i) the Minister or Ministerial Designate will always be the principal speaker;
- (ii) other speakers could include:
 - . the local State Member (and only one member of the Legislative Assembly should speak apart from the Minister for Education);
 - . a Member of Local Government;
 - . a representative of the parent body;
 - . other as appropriate.
- (iii) as a guide to length of speeches, the principal speaker may of course speak for as long as he or she deems appropriate, but 7-10 minutes is suggested as suitable. Other speeches should be no more than 5 minutes in length;
- (iv) care should be taken to select speakers for speaking ability as well as official position;
- (v) the Department's Policy on Controversial Issues in Schools is relevant to speakers at official school functions. In case of certain views or topics which might be raised by official speakers, the Principal should, as far as is practicable, ensure a balanced presentation.

7. Centenaries (or similar - as for Speech Days)

Reference should be made to booklet available from Community Relations Unit.

8. Official Opening of School Buildings

For the opening of a school or a new building, or major renovations to an existing school (project costing in excess of \$100,000) an invitation should be issued by the Principal, through the Regional Director, to the Minister to perform the ceremony. Regional Directors should submit invitations to the Leader, Community Relations Unit. The invitation may indicate an alternate nomination if the Minister is unable to attend.

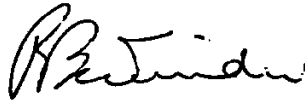
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In general, protocol will be as for Speech Days and Centenaries. Reference should be made to booklet available from Community Relations Unit.

9. Presentation of Flags

There is a longstanding tradition for Federal Members of Parliament to visit schools on behalf of the Federal Government to present, upon request, an Australian flag. A similar arrangement exists in respect of State Members distributing the State flag to schools. There is no objection to such visits (which may be initiated by the Member of Parliament) provided that they are always at the invitation of the Principal and a mutually convenient occasion can be arranged.

I trust that these guidelines covering the protocol to be adopted in relation to functions held at our schools will assist Principals, particularly in the next few months.



R B Winder
Director-General of Education
19/2/88.

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