

SPEECH BY MS GRACE FU, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AT THE CHIJ (KATONG) PRIMARY SCHOOL OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY ON FRIDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2009, AT 11.30AM AT CHIJ (KATONG) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Mr Winston Hodge, Director, Training and Development

Division

Reverend Monsignor Nicholas Chia, Archbishop of the
Catholic Archdiocese of Singapore

Sister Deirdre O'Loan, Supervisor, CHIJ schools

Ms Donne Aeria, Chairperson, IJ Board of Management

Mrs Margaret Tan, Principal, CHIJ (Katong) Primary School

Distinguished Guests

Parents, Teachers and Pupils

Good morning.

1. It gives me great pleasure to join you on this joyous and important occasion, the Official Opening of the new school building of CHIJ (Katong) Primary.

Enhancing Infrastructure in Our Schools

2. Singapore has a robust education system that is respected for its high standards. However, we must continue to evolve in response to changing needs and to prepare our

young to face future challenges. In addition to committed teachers and sound education programmes, good school

facilities must also be developed to provide a physical environment conducive to learning and creative thinking.

This new school building is part of PRIME (Programme for Rebuilding and Improving Existing Schools), an MOE

initiative to ensure that all students have access to facilities that can support a wide range of educational programmes.

3. Under PRIME, CHIJ (Katong) Primary began its rebuilding works in 2007 and completed it at the end of 2008. During this period, the school continued to maintain its vibrant school environment at the holding school in Bedok North. The Government has invested \$19 million on the PRIME Project for this school and I understand that the pupils, staff, parents and the community have also helped to raise about \$1.6 million towards the building and its facilities.

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Providing a Holistic IJ Education

4. In recent years, our education system has introduced new pathways to provide more choices and to develop fully the different talents and potential of individual students. In the

same vein, CHIJ (Katong) Primary has constantly refreshed and rejuvenated herself to keep pace with the changing needs of education, whether through the use of innovative pedagogy or an exciting range of co-curricular activities. As we look to the future, revise our strategies and reinvent ourselves, we must never lose sight of the fundamental objective of education – to nurture students with strong values. This I am glad to note, is the cornerstone of the IJ Brand of Education; a values-based education that promotes integrity, respect, commitment and compassion.

5. To be part of the IJ Family is to partake in an educational experience that is forward-looking yet steeped in tradition.

CHIJ (Katong) Primary has a long tradition of developing pupils in the aesthetics and places emphasis on developing the pupils' ability to express themselves well. From Primary 1, pupils are engaged in two of its core co-curricular programmes, namely the school-based Dance programme,

and the Speech and Drama programme. The school also emphasises the importance of a healthy lifestyle and pupils are given opportunities to join the Track and Field, Sailing and Bowling teams from as early as Primary 2.

Working with Parents and the Community

6. CHIJ (Katong) Primary recognises the important role of the family in each child's life. The school establishes close relationships with parents and shares open communication with them. In this critical partnership, the Central Parent Council plays a key role in the school's programmes and this is most evidently displayed today.

7. The school also works with other educational institutions such as Towner Gardens School and foreign schools in China and India. In the spirit of giving and sharing so as to promote educational excellence, the school hosts three visits by

overseas educators each year. The IJ culture of “spreading its wings” is indeed exemplified in the school’s outreach to various groups locally and internationally.

Conclusion

8. Nice buildings alone do not make quality education. The key to a quality education lies in the dedication of the teachers. I am pleased that CHIJ (Katong) Primary has, through the years assembled a committed team of staff who believe in and have high expectations of their students. I honour these teachers who tirelessly seek to infuse in our students the values and lifelong skills that prepare them well for the challenges ahead. It is the CHIJ experience that nurtures its girls to be loyal, confident and competent individuals who are ready to love, learn and serve.

9. As we mark the official opening of this new school

building, I am confident that the staff and pupils of CHIJ (Katong) Primary will continue to innovate and build a community with a desire to learn continuously and contribute to society.

10. On this note, I would like to extend my congratulations to the staff, pupils and the whole family of CHIJ (Katong) Primary on the official opening of the new building. It is now my pleasure to declare the new building of CHIJ (Katong) Primary School open.

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