

Speech to open the Birkdale Intermediate Arts Centre, Auckland

His Excellency, Lt Gen The Rt Hon Sir Jerry Mateparae GNZM, QSO
Governor-General of New Zealand

13 June 2013

E te Tumuaki, me te Poari Kaitiaki, e ngā Kaiako, ngā tauira, me ngā mātua, o Birkdale Intermediate, tēnā koutou katoa. I extend greetings to the Principal, Board of Trustees, the teachers, pupils and parents of Birkdale Intermediate. I specifically acknowledge: Natalie Amos, Chair of the Birkdale Intermediate School Board of Trustees and Board members; and Richard Coote, principal of Birkdale Intermediate School – tēnā koutou katoa.

Thank you for inviting me here today to open Birkdale Intermediate School's new Arts Centre. Thank you also for the splendid powhiri – I acknowledge the kaiwero (Frey Chamberlain), the kaikaranga (Akinehi, Lyric and Macy) and the kapa haka group.

I had been made aware of the school's kapa haka group. I was told that in the past two years Birkdale Intermediate School has been in the "top ten" for kapa haka in Auckland – the only school in the top ten that is not a kura kaupapa. I was also told that you have a champion rugby league team!

I congratulate Birkdale Intermediate for providing the right environment for its students. The school is known for encouraging its students to be all-rounders and to be achievers. The school is a leader in teaching critical thinking skills and has a fine technology centre.

However, I am very pleased to see that Birkdale Intermediate values artistic endeavour, and that pieces of sculpture and kinetic art have been specifically made for the school and that local artists exhibit in your art gallery. Art is very important to giving students a comprehensive education.

Today, I feel honoured to be here to open your new Art Centre. Opening new educational facilities are events that I always look forward to because they represent faith in the power of education to transform lives and a commitment to young people. Opening this new Art centre is also special because it represents the culmination of the dreams and the hard work of people – like Mr Owen Goodwin. What you are doing here at the school and the efforts of people like Owen Goodwin reminds me of the words of Dr Seuss' the Lorax: "Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not!"

As you might know, I am the Queen's representative in New Zealand. The Queen has visited New Zealand many times. I was

recently shown a message that she sent to all school children when she was here in 1963.

In her "Farewell Message to the school children of New Zealand", the Queen wrote: "Soon it will be your turn to shoulder the full responsibilities of citizenship and the progressive development of your native land. Yours will be a wonderful inheritance; a beautiful country with a rich and varied nature to be preserved and enjoyed; fertile farm lands and thriving industries; modern and prosperous towns and cities and, above all, a free and democratic system of Government. All this can be destroyed by indifference or neglect, or it can be improved and developed by your careful attention, by your plans and by your work." She ended by saying, "I am quite confident that the future of New Zealand is in excellent hands."

It is my duty, and also my great pleasure, as the Governor-General to represent the Queen today. I must say that when I see students, such as those here today at Birkdale Intermediate, and hear of their achievements, I feel the same confidence the Queen felt when she met young New Zealanders 50 years ago. What is also very satisfying to see is that parents, teachers and school communities like those here at Birkdale Intermediate are providing for the bodies and minds of their children. A great man called Nelson Mandela once observed that, "A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination."

It's now over to the students of Birkdale Intermediate School, present and future, to make great use of their new arts centre, and I hope that they find it stimulates their minds as much as their hearts about education. Kia ora huihui tātou katoa.

