



**The Nelson Thomlinson School**  
**Wigton**  
**Cumbria**  
**CA7 9PX**  
*...still "outstanding"*  
**(Ofsted, May 2013)**

**Headmaster:**  
**Mr DS Northwood, M.A., M.Ed.**

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December 2013

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As the end of my fourth term as Headmaster approaches, I am as keen as ever to ensure that standards are maintained. It might be tempting to allow routines, which are now well established, to lead to complacency but I can assure you that we are constantly reflecting on our practice and our systems with a view to improving them.

The issue of homework has come up again in recent discussion with colleagues and pupils and I am determined to crack this particular nut. We have already conducted a detailed investigation into the matter at our end but I am equally keen to know how *parents* perceive the setting and completion of homework. We have decided, therefore, to include an additional question at the end of the parents' evening feedback form and the parental questionnaire relating to this matter. If you are a parent of a Year 11 pupil or a Sixth Form student (for whom the parents' evenings have passed) and would like to give us some feedback on homework, please feel free to contact the school. For your information I have included a copy of our homework policy with this letter.

Before you provide us with feedback, it might be worth considering the following:

- Although we make every effort to ensure that pupils make a note of their homework in their planners, occasionally pupils forget to do this (or forget their planners!). What appears in their planner, therefore, is not necessarily an entirely accurate picture of the homework that has been set.
- Some pupils choose to do some of their homework in a 'study period' (Sixth Form only) or at a lunchtime/break-time so they may claim to have completed it when quizzed about it at home.
- Some tasks are open-ended. Teachers will always try to devise tasks that can be completed in a reasonable period of time (as per the homework policy) but inevitably some pupils will take longer than others, some will run out of steam sooner than others, some will wish to 'go the extra mile'.

### **Progress Reviews**

Your child should now be in possession of the Autumn Term Progress Review. Please be aware that pupils learning French in Years 7, 8 and 9 and Spanish in Years 8 and 9 may receive a level that appears to be out of kilter with other subjects and indicates that they are making less than expected progress. This is because they are relatively new to the subject and in time they are likely to 'catch up'; it should therefore not necessarily be regarded as a concern. In a similar vein, top set mathematicians have been given highly aspirational targets and we are confident that they will reach them by the end of the year.

### **GCSE Mock Grades**

Year 11 pupils will have received their mock GCSE examination results today and will no doubt be reflecting on the whole experience and the implications. Some will be pleased with their performance, others less so. Either way, it is clearly important that pupils learn from the mocks and understand the need to respond, particularly if they underperformed. The action they take in terms of revision needs to take place sooner rather than later given that the real examinations are imminent. In some cases, I imagine that the mock results will come as a shot across the bows but at the other extreme, please do congratulate your child if he/she has met his/her targets.

## **Staff leaving NTS**

At the end of this term we will be saying goodbye to Mr Tyler who retires after 12 years of dedicated service in the Modern Language Department at NTS. In addition to teaching French, he has run a number of Year 7 trips to France and has been in charge of our chess club. Mr Richardson also leaves us to take up a permanent post at Richard Rose Morton Academy. He has been a popular teacher and has worked tirelessly for the benefit of our pupils. Mrs Love will be moving to Newman School to become Head of Science, a promotion that she thoroughly deserves. We wish all three colleagues the very best.

## **Tracksuits**

Following my discussions with pupils at lunchtimes and feedback from the School Council via Mr Beechey, I have decided to allow tracksuit bottoms to be worn by pupils in **Games lessons taking place outdoors (not PE) from January to March only**. You will appreciate our determination to ensure that our high standards of uniform are maintained and to this end we will only be allowing a particular type of tracksuit bottom, the details of which are below. Pupils should continue to wear normal Games kit in PE lessons, which take place indoors. The tracksuit bottoms in question can be ordered from Stitch and Print, Wigton, and cost £18.00. They must be black with a single white stripe, and with school initials and student initials on the front side pocket. N.B. If girls choose to wear tracksuit bottoms, these must be worn underneath the green games skirt.

A reminder of the compulsory kit:

Girls: white polo shirt, green skirt, white/green socks, green athletic shorts, green sweatshirt

Boys: white shorts, green rugby shirt, green socks

Any forgotten compulsory kit or wrong kit will result in the normal detention at lunch or after school. I have been asked by the Head of PE to remind parents that all PE and games equipment belonging to your child needs to be named. For health and safety reasons, no jewellery is to be worn in PE or Games lessons.

## **E-safety and social media**

I am grateful to our former colleague, Mr Kinsella, for holding a series of assemblies on this subject and for coming in to speak to parents at the recent information evening. It is perhaps worth reiterating here that pupils are not allowed to use Facebook if they are under the age of 14 and that Facebook and social media sites are blocked in school. The presentation that Mr Kinsella gave is available on the school website, alongside other useful links relating to e-safety, under 'Parents'/Advice and Guidance'. (Frustratingly, many of the issues that arise in school to do with social media stem from incidents that have taken place outside school.)

## **Norovirus information**

Please find attached with this letter correspondence from the Cumbria & Lancashire Health Protection Team relating to the 'norovirus season'. There is no action for you to take here; the letter and leaflet are for information only.

## **School closure in bad weather**

If the weather deteriorates in the next few months to the extent where we are forced to close the school, please note that you will be informed as soon as is practicable via the school web-site and Radio Cumbria. I should reiterate here that we will endeavour to keep the school open whenever possible and will only resort to closing it in extreme circumstances.

## **Gas works and road closures**

We have been informed by Cumbria County Council and British Gas that major road works along High Street, Wigton, will commence on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2014 and continue for approximately 8 weeks. There will be two phases of road closure lasting approximately 4 weeks each. A plan of the proposed closures can be accessed via our school website under 'Parents'/School Transport'.

Phase 2 will have significant impact on access to The Nelson Thomlinson School. From Proctor's Square to South End a road closure will be in place. There will only be access to the school car park for The Nelson Thomlinson School staff.

You will appreciate that this is going to cause a great deal of congestion at and around the crossroads by the BP Garage and the entire length of Lowmoor Road. The Home to School Transport providers have also been issued with diversion routes and this will increase the traffic along the entire length of Lowmoor Road. I believe that these are still under discussion and any changes to timings will be communicated through our Transport Co-ordinator, Katie Hoskins. Any changes will also be posted on our website. Please log on to

[www.nts.cumbria.sch.uk](http://www.nts.cumbria.sch.uk) . I would ask that during this time parents consider alternative arrangements for dropping off children for school away from these immediate areas.

Those parents that have been granted permission to access the school grounds in order to drop-off/collect their child will continue to be allowed to do so. However, you will not be able to turn right when you leave the school via the one-way system.

### **Photo permission**

Please find attached a form that we would like you to complete. Previously we asked you to grant permission via the data collection sheet but we feel that we now need to be more specific in terms of what we are requesting and why.

### **FONTS 100+ club**

I have attached a letter from the Friends of Nelson Thomlinson School regarding their 100+ club. This is one of the ways FONTS raises money for the school and we are extremely grateful for their support.

As ever, I would urge parents to contact the school if they feel that we can improve the service we provide in any way.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Northwood', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr DS Northwood  
Headmaster