



Founded 1714

The Nelson Thomlinson School
Wigton
Cumbria
CA7 9PX

...still "outstanding"
(Ofsted, May 2013)

Headmaster:
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Dear Parents,

Holidays during term time

I have received a number of letters from parents recently requesting time off school for their child. Whilst it is up to me to decide what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances', I am often placed in a very difficult position and must judge each case on its merits. This aside and no matter what changes have been made to governmental directives, the fact of the matter is that absence from school has a significant impact on a child's progress and attainment, and it is for this reason *primarily* that the school's Attendance Officer has been instructed to intervene when a child's attendance drops to 90%. Very occasionally there may be good reason for a child to be absent from school (other than due to illness) but in most cases you will appreciate that I have little choice but to decline the request for it to be 'authorised'.

Uniform Cards

Uniform has improved significantly this year with very few pupils failing to meet the standards we insist upon. The Uniform Card system is about to be introduced to only 9 pupils compared to the 45 this time last year. Uniform cards will be distributed on Monday 4th November and three staff signatures will result in an after-school detention with a member of the Senior Management Team. The system will be reviewed at regular intervals and pupils will be removed from the list as appropriate.

After-school Detentions

Please note that as a school we are only obliged to give **24** hours' notice to parents when a child is required to stay behind for an after-school detention. In reality we tend to give more notice than this when we can.

Early Entry for GCSE Examinations

As you may know, the Secretary of State for Education recently announced that he was changing government policy with regard to schools entering pupils for GCSE examinations early, whereby the first result now counts towards the school performance table, *not* the best result from any number of attempts. NTS has always used early entry selectively, and with the best interests of the pupils being our first concern, not our league table standing. Therefore, we will continue to use early entry where it is appropriate.

The main area of our attention currently is the GCSE English qualifications. As a result of another retrospectively imposed decision from the government, the 20% value of Speaking and Listening tasks is included in the GCSE for November 2013 entry, but not for June 2014 entry. In conjunction with colleagues in the English Department, we have elected to take advantage of the Speaking and Listening marks and enter some of Year 11 for November 2013 entry. This has been based on our knowledge of the pupils concerned, and our belief that the 20% available for Speaking and Listening will be of benefit to those pupils who may not necessarily secure a Grade C in June 2014 without their Speaking and Listening mark being included in the GCSE.

School Trips

Following a request from a parent, our Assistant Head has included with this letter a list of future school trips that cost in excess of £50. We are hoping that this will help you to budget for trips, plan ahead and make decisions about your child's participation in school trips. Much of the detail concerning these trips has of course yet to be finalised and we will update the information as soon as is practicable.

Prize Ceremonies

These were held for Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 in school in extended assemblies during the week beginning Monday 23rd September. The formal senior prize ceremony for the Sixth Form was held on Friday 27th September in St. Mary's Church. All ceremonies went without a hitch and the pupils' behaviour was immaculate.

With the Tercentenary in mind it was wonderful to welcome former student Mr Geoff Edmondson OBE back to be our special guest speaker at the Senior Prize Ceremony. Mr Edmondson features in our sporting honours hall of fame, having played rugby for Bristol and Exeter and taught and lectured in schools and universities for many years. He was awarded his OBE in 2001 for services to sport. Mr Edmondson also donated the 'Spirit of Sport' Trophy to the PE department who will be awarding it to a worthy recipient in their Awards Ceremony this year.

The senior prize day was the finale to our usual week of celebrations across all years for academic excellence, attitude and service and full 100% attendance. We welcomed back Mr Downes, former Assistant Head and Head of Sixth Form, and Mr J. Herbert, former Deputy Head, who were our special guests during the week. In all, 80 academic prizes were awarded and our Cumberland News Prize photo appeared in the newspaper. (We now struggle to fit all of our winners into one library photo!) Also featured in the newspaper was Year 11 student Owen Ogden, who won a national Spirit of Normandy Trust's Young Historian competition. The winner of the Community Service Cup was Emily Jackson.

Building works

With the new bus shelters and new roofing over the external lunch queuing area, I hope your children now feel better protected from the weather. You should also be aware that maintenance work on our library windows is soon to be completed and the scaffolding will be removed shortly.

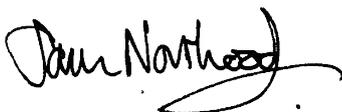
Staffing

After 5 ½ years of teaching at NTS, Mr Kinsella (ICT) will be leaving us at October half-term to spend more time on his ICT business and will be replaced by Mr Richardson. We wish Mr Kinsella the very best of luck with his new career and thank him for his hard work, particularly on the extra-curricular front.

Questionnaires

Pupil and parental questionnaires are currently under review and will be distributed at Christmas.

Kind regards,



Mr DS Northwood