



Founded 1714

The Nelson Thomlinson School
Wigton
Cumbria
CA7 9PX

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

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Dear Parents

The new term has started smoothly by all accounts and pupils appear to be settling into their new classes well. However, the mood amongst staff has been somewhat dampened by some very sad news that I was made aware of towards the end of the summer holidays, and it is only appropriate that I convey this to you all. Our Chair of Governors, Stuart Turnbull, suffered a heart attack whilst cycling with friends and efforts to revive him were unsuccessful. This came as a shock to all of us who knew him and, with his loyalty to the school and his generous support, he will indeed be sorely missed. Sue Temple, current Vice-Chair, has assumed the role of acting Chair for the time being. The funeral was held at St James Church, Carlisle, at 12pm on Thursday 4th September.

Learning

The quality of your child's learning is always a key focus here and each year we review our provision and look at ways to enhance it. Developing pupil literacy is a long-standing focus at NTS and is explicitly taught in all subject areas. In addition we have subscribed to the **Accelerated Reader programme** for our Year 7s and hope that they will be inspired by this fun and engaging approach to reading. I am sure you will agree that effective literacy skills open doors in life and we hope that we can rely on your support as we continue with this focus. An additional theme for 2014-15 will be the **active participation of pupils in their lessons**. As you will know from our Attitude to Learning (AtL) criteria we believe that just sitting in a classroom and behaving does not necessarily mean that learning is happening. Pupils need to engage with the tasks set, ask questions and interact with their peers and teachers. Our teachers deploy many different techniques to encourage active engagement from all pupils whatever their personality or disposition may be. We will be talking to pupils about these strategies and the AtL criteria, urging them to work towards AtL grades 4 and 5 and identifying those pupils who need more support in this area.

In terms of **homework**, I have asked staff this year to think even harder about the purpose of each task that they set and to ensure that they stick rigidly to the homework timetable. If you, as parents, feel that this is not being adhered to and a pattern starts to develop, please address your concerns to the school immediately. I have attached a Guide to Homework, written by Mr Parker (Curriculum Deputy), for your reference.

Exam Results

At GCSE 66% of the students gained 5 or more 'higher grades' including English and Maths (which equals our second highest percentage in the last ten years) and 74% gained 5 or more higher grades. **Please note that the figure of 66% is the same whether or not we include so-called 'equivalent qualifications' such as BTECs, and this is indicative of our approach and the value we place on GCSEs as the 'gold standard'**. (League tables in local and national newspapers often do not tell the whole story.) 39% of our students gained a full English Baccalaureate. Out of a cohort

of 225 we have 25 students who gained 8 or more A/A* grades. William Bayliff and Tara Dickson achieved A* grades across the board. All our Year 11 pupils should be very proud of their achievements.

At A Level, we are equally delighted with our results and our students have achieved some excellent grades once again, with over a quarter of all entries being A/A*. The indications are that **ALL of our students have been successful in securing their offers for University, apprenticeships or work-related training**. This is a remarkable achievement and I would like to thank the students for their efforts in securing their grades but also, obviously, the staff involved in helping them reach their potential – particularly Mrs Lynch (now retired), Mr Walker and Mrs Pearson.

We are particularly pleased with the students' average points score of 960, which is likely to rank once again amongst the very best in the county. Out of a cohort of 123 we have 14 students who gained 3 or more A/A* grades and 8 students who gained 4 or more A/A* grades. Rachel Horton successfully secured her place at St Anne's College, Oxford, to read Experimental Psychology.

Staff changes

We are pleased to have recruited the following staff for the new academic year:

Mrs L Smith	Geography maternity cover
Mr M Blackwell	Geography maternity cover
Mr A Ahart	RE/History
Mrs J Bell	Music
Ms C Mayer	Technology
Ms L Cowgill	Technology
Mrs W Butler	Science
Mr P Wakefield	Science
Miss E Milligan	Science
Mr D Noble	Science
Miss K McCormick	PE
Mrs J Brown	Maths TA
Miss L Sara	Science (temporary technician)
Mrs E Walker	Science, part-time administration
Mrs D Wills	Learning Support TA
Mrs J Rice	Cover Supervisor
Mrs J Lancaster	Cover Supervisor
Mr B Pearson	Part-time Janitor

Prize Ceremonies

For Years 8, 9, 10 and 11 ceremonies will be held in school in extended assemblies starting at 9.15am and lasting approximately half an hour:

Year 11	Tuesday 23 rd September	(receiving Year 10 prizes)
Year 10	Monday 22 nd September	(receiving Year 9 prizes)
Year 9	Wednesday 24 th September	(receiving Year 8 prizes)
Year 8	Thursday 25 th September	(receiving Year 7 prizes)

We will hold our formal senior prize ceremony for the Sixth Form on Friday 26th September at 2pm in St. Mary's Church. Prizes will be presented to last year's Year 11 as well as to the Sixth Form.

Reward systems

We trialled a new reward system last year with our Year 7s and this will now be rolled out to all of Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9). Pupils collect signatures from teachers for exceptional pieces of work (in terms of quality and/or effort), test performances, sporting achievements, acts of good will etc. and receive a 'prize' once they have reached a certain number. It was decided by the pupils themselves that one of the top prizes would be 'tea with the Headmaster'!

Building works

I am delighted to say that the Sixth-Form mezzanine was completed on schedule and is now fully equipped with modern office-style furniture and a new computer suite. The whole of the ground floor has been completely redecorated. The Sixth-formers are delighted with their new accommodation and I am confident that it will make studying at school a more comfortable, even pleasurable, experience for them. If you are interested in seeing the new facilities, please contact reception and I will be happy to show you around.

Data Collection Sheet

The Data Collection Sheet will shortly be issued to Y7 and new pupils from other year groups. Please amend or complete this as appropriate. **Please return the Data Collection Sheet to the school by Friday 12th September.**

There is a section on the Data Collection Sheet where we ask you to confirm that you would agree to your child receiving any emergency medical treatment if the situation arises and we are unable to contact you. If you do not agree, it will not necessarily bar your child from attending activities, but if you do have concerns we would be grateful if you would contact the school.

The Data Collection Sheet is issued yearly for you to check and confirm that the information we hold about your child(ren) is correct. During the year, if there are any changes to personal details you are required to inform us to make sure we have as up-to-date information as possible. This is imperative in situations where your child may be ill and we need to contact you urgently.

Year 7 Tercentenary Ties

As a gesture of good will, these have been given to the new Year 7 pupils free of charge.

Year 7 Parents and Founders' Day

With this being our Tercentenary Year, we have decided to invite all Year 7 parents to our Founders' Day Service in St Mary's Church in Wigton. The service starts at 11.30am on Thursday 9th October. You are most welcome to join us.

Reminders:

Driving in the School Grounds

- If you are bringing your child to school by car in the morning or collecting them at the end of the day **please do not drive through the school grounds.** (Students arriving by taxi or with physical disabilities are exempt from this.)
- If you are bringing your child to school by car in the morning, please do not stop in the bus bay - you are likely to cause problems for the large number of buses that deliver our students to school.
- At other times when you visit the site for an appointment or to pick up a sick child **please remember that there is a one-way system in operation at all times through the school grounds.** Entry is through the bus-bay and the exit is onto the High Street.
- Please be aware that there are county parking restrictions in force on Lowmoor road.

School Buses

If your child comes to school on a bus, sensible behaviour is obviously expected and this includes sitting down on a seat with the **seatbelt fastened.**

Authorized absence

I should remind you that *only in 'exceptional circumstances'* can I grant authorised leave of absence for pupils. Exceptional circumstances do not include family holidays.

Receiving school letters by email

We will send our school letters and newsletters to parents by email. If you are already receiving information in this way you do not need to do anything. However, if you are not on the list – or the parents of a new pupil – please go to the following website and follow the instructions on the

webpage: www.nts.cumbria.sch.uk/school-letters. Please contact us if there are any problems. For ease of administration all pupils are also given a hard copy of letters and newsletters.

Learning Gateway

Once again, I should like to remind parents that they can access their child's data, including his/her school reports, via the Internet. If you would like to use this facility, please go to the school website at www.nts.cumbria.sch.uk and go to **Parents** then the **Learning Gateway** followed by **Usage Policy & Request Form**. Please print off this form, complete the details and return it to the school reception. You will then be issued with your personalised access details. If you are already using this facility there is no need to complete another form. If you require a hard copy of the policy and/or the form please contact the school office.

Other matters

Term Dates, Examinations and Parents' Evenings

These are attached. Please keep them for reference.

Adult Education

Please find attached a list of available courses.

Year 6 Open Evening

If friends of yours are parents with pupils currently in Year 6, please remind them that our Open Day is on Monday 15th September and that presentations delivered by the Senior Management Team start at 6.30pm (repeated at 7.15pm). Tours are available that evening, or during the school day on Monday to Friday of that week. Do ask them to contact reception to arrange a tour.

Finally, I should take this opportunity to remind you of the following paragraph taken from the school prospectus:

"We continue to be ambitious on behalf of *your* children - *our* pupils - and continue to expect in return your support on matters such as homework, behaviour, uniform and respect for others. It is equally paramount that you tell us when you have concerns or when we might have got something wrong. The School continues to pride itself in its attention to detail and when things do need fine-tuning then I would like to know."

Please do, therefore, support us in our work but also challenge us – politely, if you would - as and when you see fit. I am as keen as ever to provide the best possible education for your child.

Yours sincerely

Mr DS Northwood
Headmaster

Holidays 2014-15

Half term Monday 27th – Friday 31st October
Christmas Friday 19th December – Monday 5th January (Staff INSET Monday 5th)

Half term Monday 16th – Friday 20th February
Easter Monday 30th March – Friday 10th April

Half term Monday 25th – Friday 29th May
Summer Monday 20th July

Parents' Evenings

Monday 15th September Y6 Open Evening
Monday 29th September Y7 Form Tutors meet some parents (mainly by invitation)
Monday 20th October Y13 Parents' Evening
Tuesday 4th November Y11 Parents' Study Skills Meeting
Thursday 6th November Y12 Parents' Evening
Thursday 20th November Y11 Parents' Evening
Monday 24th November Y7 Parents' Evening (NELST)
Thursday 4th December Y7 Parents' Evening (HMWG)

Thursday 29th January Y10 Parents' Evening
Monday 9th February Y8 Parents' Evening (NELST)
Thursday 26th February Y8 Parents' Evening (HMWG)
Monday 2nd March Y9 Parents' Evening (NELST)
Tuesday 3rd March Y11 6th Form Information Evening
Thursday 12th March Y9 Parents' Evening (HMWG)

Monday 6th July New Y7 Parents' Information Evening
Thursday 9th July HE & Careers Information Evening for Y12 Parents

Exams

Week beginning Monday 22nd September Y7 CAT tests
Tuesday 4th November GCSE English resits
Wednesday 5th & Friday 7th November GCSE Maths resits
Week beginning 10th November Y11 Art Mock exam (provisional)
Weeks beginning Monday 1st & 8th December Y11 Mocks

Weeks beginning Monday 19th & 26th January Y12/13 Mocks
Monday 2nd February Y11 Spanish Orals
Thursday 26th & Friday 27th February Y11 French Orals
Weeks beginning Monday 9th & 16th March Y10 Mocks
Monday 20th April GCSE Art exam (provisional)
Friday 24th April A level Art exam (provisional)

Monday 11th May Y12 Study Leave starts (return 15th June provisional)
Monday 11th May – Tuesday 23rd June GCSE exams (provisional) & AS & A2 exams (provisional)

Week beginning Monday 1st June Y7 exams
Week beginning Monday 9th June Y8 exams
Week beginning Monday 15th June Y9 exams

Homework: A guide for parents.

Over the course of the last twelve months, the school has carried out a full review of how we use homework. A new policy has been devised and agreed, and what follows is a summary to enable you to take a full and active role in your child's progress.

The basic principles:

The five general principles that support the use of homework within the curriculum link to the notion that homework helps develop pupils as independent learners. As a result, homework should always be:

- **Timely** – the right amount on the right day
- **Regular** – to support a routine that encourages time management and self-responsibility
- **Motivating** – we want pupils to want to learn so that they improve over time
- **Purposeful** – there must be a clear outcome from the work that supports learning
- **Differentiated** – where possible

Homework types:

In general, a homework assignment can serve one or more of the following purposes:

- **Preparation** so that the next lesson can take a more interactive form. This might take the form of reading or research.
- **Practice** in various skills – for example mathematical, language, note-making or essay writing.
- **Learning** a stated section of work for a test.
- **Developing study skills** - especially revision. Good homework may also develop self-confidence, self-discipline and a motivation to succeed.
- Saving time in class, e.g. performing tasks that do not require teacher supervision/guidance/input

The specific activities that a pupil may be asked to do are:

1. Practice activities a. Repeat skills/knowledge until secure b. Analyse, evaluate and reflect c. Exam preparation	2. Learning activities a. Factual recall b. New terminology c. Memorising through revision
3. Research activities a. Gathering information b. Organisation of information c. Steps in a larger project	4. Creative activities a. Quizzes on a topic to test each other b. Extended projects c. Revision toolkits
5. Extended outcome activities a. Written work developing knowledge, understanding and skills gained in lessons b. Develop wider awareness	6. On-line activities a. Moodle b. Kerboodle c. Bitesize
7. Literacy practice a. Spelling, punctuation and grammar b. Reading for next lesson	8. Preparation activities a. Organising ingredients b. Planning
9. Teacher set, or student choice activities a. Homework challenges	

Occasionally, homework that consists of finishing a piece of classwork may be set, but this should not be the norm.

Normal pattern:

The volume of homework each pupil receives is determined by the homework timetable. The majority of pupils will receive homework as follows:

Key Stage 3:

On average, each pupil will receive one or two homeworks per night per week. Subjects with more than one lesson per week may set two homeworks per week. Subjects with one lesson per week, eg. RE, may set homework once per fortnight. Practical subjects, eg. Art and Technology may set homework in the form of projects that will run over each curriculum module.

The notional time that students are expected to spend on each homework task is as follows:

- Year 7: 20 minutes
- Year 8: 25 minutes
- Year 9: 30 minutes

Key Stage 4:

Most subjects have two homework sessions per week, with each piece being 30 to 40 minutes **on average**. Practical subjects, e.g. Art and Technology usually set homework assignments once per week, with the duration being extended accordingly. Exceptions are PSHRE/PSHEC and Games, where none is set.

Sixth Form:

In the Lower Sixth, GCE students are expected to complete at least 2 hours homework per week per subject. In the Upper Sixth, where students generally take fewer subjects, this can be expected to rise to between 4 and 5 hours per subject per week. This is because most subjects have two teachers, and each one will set homework.

Student planners:

All students are issued with a planner in which the homework set is recorded day by day. Subject teachers should be confident when setting homework that the pupil has recorded:

- The task/assignment – accurately transcribed from your instructions
- The length of time you expect the homework to take
- The deadline for submission

The planner has three main uses:

- It serves as an aide-memoire to the pupil, helping with the organisation of books etc.
- It serves as a record for the pupil (and the form tutor) of the work set
- It should help parents to become involved with their children's learning by enabling them to review the homework that has been set

Parents are requested to sign the planner each week. Form tutors should check this weekly. It can also be used by tutors as a way of monitoring pupil progress, and pupils can be asked to produce the planner at registration each morning, correctly completed, together with the homework that has been done the night before.

And finally:

The successful and impactful use of homework can only be achieved if the partnership between pupils, teachers and parents is strong. Therefore, please do not hesitate to contact the school if you have any concerns or queries about homework and its' place in the NTS curriculum.

Mr N Parker

Deputy Head – Curriculum
June 2014