



Founded 1714

The Nelson Thomlinson School
Wigton
Cumbria
CA7 9PX

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

Headmaster:
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Dear Parents,

I talked about pride when I took over the Headship twelve months ago and that pride has not diminished: at the time of writing we are *the only secondary school in Cumbria to have been judged "outstanding" under the new Ofsted framework*. But having come through the recent Ofsted Inspection with flying colours, it is clearly important for us not to rest on our laurels. Some pointers from the Inspection Team have provided a thrust to this year's School Development Plan and, still buoyed by the Inspection result, we are now as keen as ever to make The Nelson Thomlinson School "outstanding plus", tweaking aspects of our practice where necessary.

To this end, allow me to include a paragraph I wrote at this time last year. I feel as strongly as ever about both matters:

"(a) 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. **(b)** 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."

This year, as part of our School Development Plan and in line with the value we place on traditional skills, we will be increasing our focus on **Literacy skills**. Regardless of trends and initiatives, we firmly believe that children must be able to read, process and understand written information with confidence and also to communicate their ideas accurately. In school we will be continuing our focus on comprehension skills and reinforcing the importance of applying lessons learned in English to all subject areas. Changes to GCSE marking now place greater emphasis on spelling, punctuation and grammar and this will help us to reinforce our emphasis on all pupils enhancing their reading and writing skills. You can support us in this endeavour by talking to your children about this matter.

There are a few additional matters that I would like to draw your attention to:

New reporting structure for 2013-14:

From September 2013, we will be moving to a four point reporting structure, made up of:

- 1 x October Attitude to Learning (AtL) review
- 2 x Progress Reviews
- 1 x Full Report

The reporting points are spread across the academic year for each year group, meaning that you will receive information on progress each term. The reporting structure is then supplemented by the usual Parents' Evening so that you can meet each subject teacher, discuss your child's progress and

consider areas for further improvement. **The new Progress Review replaces the Short Report** in the old system, and contains mostly numerical data. It has been designed to inform you about:

- Target grades for Key Stages 4 and 5 (KS4 and 5), or target levels for Key Stage 3 (KS3).
- Current grades for KS4 and 5, or current average levels for KS3. The current grade is the grade a pupil would get if they completed the GCSE or A-level course at that point in time.
- Progress being made. This compares each current grade and level against the target, and is expressed in terms of each pupil making expected progress, more than expected progress, or less than expected progress.
- AtL grades for each subject.
- A summary grid of performance in Form Time activities, completed by the Form Tutor.
- A short, summative comment written by a member of the senior staff.

The Full Report is an evolution of the existing Long Report, and has been designed to inform you about everything shown in a Progress Review, along with the following additional information:

- A teacher comment about your child's performance and progress in each subject.
- A single sentence that is a Strategy for Improvement. Teachers will be asked to state one improvement that your child should strive to make that should help them to make better *progress*.
- A Tutor comment to support the summary grid of each child's performance in Form Time activities.

We have decided to make these changes to the reporting structure so that there is better integration between the progress reviews and full reports and our processes for the regular monitoring of pupil *progress*. This means that we expect to be better able to meet the aim of our mantra of 'getting our improvements in early'. **To support us with this work, it is very important that you write a comment of your own at the bottom of each progress review and report, and I strongly encourage you to do so.**

Holidays:

I should remind you that *only in 'exceptional circumstances'* can I grant authorised leave of absence for pupils. Please refer to the attached letter from the local authority.

Building works:

I am delighted to say that after many months of delays, the **bus shelters** have at last been erected. These were built largely in response to feedback from pupils and I hope that waiting for buses in adverse weather will prove to be a more pleasant experience from now on. Also in response to pupil voice and following discussions I had with a number of pupils, we have installed **roofing over the external lunch queuing area**, again to protect them from the weather. You should also be aware that maintenance work is being carried out on our **library windows**. There is likely to be a degree of disturbance in this area whilst the work is being completed but things should return to normal by mid-September.

Marketing:

It has never been our style to boast about our achievements but with falling birth-rates in the area (and consequently smaller year groups and less funding), a change to our marketing strategy has been prudent. You will have seen the banners on the entrance gates, which, I hope, are deemed to be suitably tasteful, and we have started to advertise key events more prominently in the media. **The school website was long overdue an overhaul and the new version is now up and running.** I would very much appreciate feedback on the new site (positive or negative). (We are already aware of certain texts that require updating/correcting and the need for more action shots of NTS pupils; both of these issues will be addressed shortly.)

Year 7 Tercentenary Ties:

As a gesture of goodwill, these will be given to the new Year 7 pupils free of charge.

Reminder re: 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:

Reminder: 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**.

Receiving school letters by email

Reminder: 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.

Data Collection Sheet:

Once again we need to ask for your assistance with regard to information we require. The Data Collection Sheet (Y7 and new pupils from other year groups) will be issued shortly. Please amend or complete this as appropriate. It is particularly important that you complete the photo permissions slip.

**N.B. We would like the Data Collection Sheet to be returned to the school by:
Wednesday 11th September.**

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.

Exam Results:

At GCSE 61.5% of the students gained 5 or more 'higher grades' including English and Maths and 79% gained 5 or more higher grades. 45.5% of our students gained a full English Baccalaureate.

Out of a cohort of 231 we have 33 students who gained 8 or more A/A* grades and provisional data shows that 27.4% of all our entries were A/A*. Our Year 11 pupils should be very proud of their achievements.

At A Level, we are delighted with our results and our students have achieved some excellent grades once again, with over a quarter of all entries being A/A*. Early indications are that the majority of our

students have been successful in securing their offers for University, apprenticeships or work-related training.

Out of a cohort of 111 we have 6 students who gained 3 or more A/A* grades, 10 students who gained 4 or more A/A* grades and 2 who gained 5 A/A* grades.

We have 5 students who will be taking up Oxbridge places:

Patrick Gordon is going to Selwyn College, Cambridge, to read Computer Science with Natural Sciences; Katherine Murrant is going to Worcester College, Oxford, to read Modern Languages; Beverley Noble is going to Somerville College, Oxford, to read French and English Literature; Alison Ogden is going to Christ's College, Cambridge, to read Human, Social and Political Sciences; and Arthur Spencer is going to Wadham College, Oxford, to read Engineering.

Staff changes:

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

Miss J Burgess (Teacher of Science)
Mr D Parker (Teacher of Science)
Miss J Southwell (Teacher of Science)

Gill Wyatt becomes our new Administration Supervisor, replacing Sarah Bragg who has retired after many years of dedicated service.

Miss Rudd (Learning Support) got married and will now be known as Mrs Clark.

Miss Birkett (RE) got married and will now be known as Mrs Dixon.

Miss Farmer (Geography) also got married but will retain her maiden name.

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 24 th September	(receiving Year 10 prizes)
Year 10	Monday 23 th September	(receiving Year 9 prizes)
Year 9	Wednesday 25 th September	(receiving Year 8 prizes)
Year 8	Thursday 26 th September	(receiving Year 7 prizes)

We will hold our formal senior prize ceremony for the Sixth Form on Friday 27th 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.

Term Dates, Examinations and Parents' Evenings:

These are printed below. Please keep them for reference.

Yours sincerely,

Mr DS Northwood
Headmaster

Holidays 2013-14

Half term	Monday 28 th October – Friday 1 st November
Christmas	Thursday 19 th December – Friday 3 rd January
Half term	Monday 17 th – Friday 21 st February
Easter	Thursday 10 th – Tuesday 22 nd April
Half term	Monday 26 th – Friday 30 th May
Summer	Monday 21 st July

Parents' Evenings

Monday 16 th September	Y6 Open Evening
Monday 14 th October	Y7 Form Tutors meet some parents by invitation
Thursday 24 th October	Y13 Parents' Evening
Wednesday 6 th November	Y11 Parents' Study Skills Meeting
Thursday 7 th November	Y12 Parents' Evening
Thursday 14 th November	Y11 Parents' Evening
Thursday 12 th December	Y10 Parents' Evening
Monday 6 th January	Y7 Parents' Evening (NELST)
Thursday 16 th January	Y7 Parents' Evening (HMW)
Monday 27 th January	Y8 Parents' Evening (NELST)
Thursday 6 th February	Y8 Parents' Evening (HMWG)
Monday 3 rd March	Y9 Parents' Evening (NELST)
Tuesday 4 th March	Y11 6 th Form Information Evening
Thursday 13 th March	Y9 Parents' Evening (HMWG)
Thursday 3 rd April	Sports Awards Evening
Monday 7 th July	New Y7 Parents Information Evening
Thursday 10 th July	HE & Careers Information Evening for Y12 Parents

Exams

Week Beginning Monday 23 rd September	Y7 CAT tests
Tuesday 5 th November	GCSE English resits
Friday 8 th & Monday 11 th November	GCSE Maths resits
Weeks beginning Monday 25 th November & Monday 2 nd December	Y11 Mocks
Weeks beginning Monday 27 th January & Monday 3 rd February	Y12/13 Mocks
Monday 3 rd February	Y11 Spanish Orals
Thursday 27 th & Friday 28 th February	French Orals
Weeks beginning Monday 24 th & Monday 31 st March	Y10 Mocks
Monday 7 th April	GCSE Art exam (provisional)
Wednesday 9 th April	A level Art exam (provisional)
Monday 12 th May	Y12 Study leave starts
Monday 12 th May – Tuesday 24 th June	GCSE exams (provisional)
	AS & A2 exams (provisional)
Week beginning Monday 2 nd June	Y7 exams
Week beginning Monday 9 th June	Y8 exams
Week beginning Monday 16 th June	Y9 exams