



The Nelson Thomlinson School
Wigton
Cumbria
CA7 9PX

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

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

September 2015

Dear Parents

The start of the new term has gone very smoothly and pupils appear to be settling into their new classes well, as always. The fine weather has clearly helped and it has been nice to see so many happy faces out on the fields at break and lunchtimes.

Examination Results

AS and A-Level results were again excellent this year. With an average points score of 933, we are likely to rank, once again, as the best non-selective comprehensive in the county and according to the Advanced Level Performance System (ALPS) - an external measure of our results, which ranks schools' performances on a 9 point scale - we scored a grade 4 (almost a 3) at A2 Level, which ALPS describe as "very good", and a grade 2 at AS Level, which is deemed to be "outstanding". Both of our Oxbridge candidates were successful in gaining their places: Emily Ostridge to read Law at Keble College, Oxford, and Lucy Thompson to read Physics at Wadham College, Oxford.

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 and their destinations of choice – particularly Mr Walker, Dr Lovegrove and Mrs Pearson.

Our GCSE results were out of kilter compared to previous years but given the relative weakness of the year group as a whole academically, I am pleased that 69% of pupils achieved five A*-C grades. As you will know, we have never been complacent here – in fact, this has always been a hallmark of previous success – and as usual we are working hard to ensure 'normality' is restored next summer. In many individual cases, pupils actually did very well and they deserve to be congratulated. (Daniel Edgar deserves a special mention for achieving a full suite of A/A*'s.)

Learning

We were delighted to see so many of our Year 7 pupils attend the Literacy and Numeracy celebration evening before the summer holidays. We offer, free of charge, small group or one-to-one tuition for any Year 7 pupil who enters the school with less than a level 4 in English or Maths. The tuition gives pupils confidence in areas they often find difficult and off-putting. It also helps ensure that any gaps in understanding are filled so that the secondary curriculum can be accessed. Pupils who attended last year enjoyed collecting their certificates and receiving prizes in the form of stationery and dictionaries. Dr Henley and the Learning Support Department will be assessing Year 7 pupils in the first half-term and contacting the parents of pupils who will receive this extra tuition.

Developing the literacy of our pupils is a fundamental priority at the school. The ability to read confidently has a direct effect upon academic success and general confidence and motivation in school. We have a big focus on reading and comprehension for all ages and abilities of pupils. All Year 7s will participate in the Accelerated Reading scheme and parents will receive more information this half-term. The library is extremely well-stocked and open within and beyond the school day. In addition we discretely monitor the progress of any pupil whose reading age is below their actual age and we will prioritise support for those pupils. We do hope you will support our focus by discussing reading at home and encouraging your children to read every day outside school. Some children are reluctant to read. This reluctance often stems from difficulties with reading,

choosing books that are too difficult or not being able to find a text that interests them. If you believe your child shows these traits, please do not hesitate to contact the school and we will support you in getting your child to read.

Whole school photograph

Every five years we have a whole school photograph taken and this is scheduled to take place during the morning of Monday 14th September. The photograph is displayed in school and is available for purchase but is not published. If you do not want your child to be included in the photograph, please contact us before 9am on Monday.

Homework

I have asked staff once again to ensure that the purpose of each task that they set is appropriate and that they stick rigidly to the homework timetable. If you, as parents, feel that this is not the case or that the timetable is not being adhered to, please address your concerns to the school immediately. I have attached a Guide to Homework, written by Mr Parker (Curriculum Deputy), for your reference.

Staff changes

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

Mrs G Allin	Part-time Teacher of Maths
Ms N Chicken	Part-time Teacher of Art
Mr L Heap	Maths Higher Level Teaching Assistant
Miss R Lightfoot	Teacher of English
Mr S Knott	Teacher of Science
Mr K Watts	Teacher of Technology

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 29 th September	(receiving Year 10 prizes)
Year 10	Monday 28 th September	(receiving Year 9 prizes)
Year 9	Wednesday 30 th September	(receiving Year 8 prizes)
Year 8	Thursday 1 st October	(receiving Year 7 prizes)

We will hold our formal senior prize ceremony for the Sixth Form on Friday 2nd October 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 system (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 goodwill 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

Once again, a number of building projects have been completed during the summer break. Externally, the main changes include a new separate pedestrian exit to High Street plus a new multi-lane long/triple jump facility on the sports field. Internally, we have created a new teaching facility (T10) ideal for smaller groups of up to a maximum of 14 pupils/Sixth-Formers. In addition to these specific projects we have continued with the rolling programme of improvements and maintenance to the school buildings. During 2015 the roof on House block has been replaced and new windows have been installed in both the Science block and the front of the original school building. Finally, an extensive programme of decoration inside the sports block has been completed including the sports hall and both the boys and girls changing rooms. The main corridor on the ground floor running the length of the Science block down to Learning Support has been carpeted to reduce echo and thus improve the learning environment.

Data Collection Sheet

The Data Collection Sheet (for Y7 and new pupils from other year groups) will be issued shortly. Please amend or complete this as appropriate. 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.

Digital/Video Images Permission Letter

It is particularly important that you complete this fully. We often like to celebrate our successes by including photos of NTS pupils in our prospectuses and newsletters but it is obviously important that you give us permission if you feel comfortable doing so.

Parental Questionnaires (for pupils in Years 8 to 11)

Please complete this and return it to your pupil's Form Tutor.

Year 7 Tercentenary Ties

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

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.** (Pupils 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 pupils 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.**

Uniform

I must say how smart the vast majority of pupils look at the moment, especially the new Year 7s and students in the Sixth Form.

In fact, school uniform continues to be a source of pride in NTS but the fashion trend towards skinny leg trousers in all the high street shops is frustrating. The choice of tailored trousers for girls is limited but there are options available. During the course of the year some parents will be asked to change any unsuitable trousers and we will provide details of local stockists who offer trousers which are in line with the uniform outlined in the prospectus.

Authorized absence

I should remind you that *only in 'exceptional circumstances'* can I grant authorized leave of absence for pupils. Exceptional circumstances do not include family holidays. You will be interested to know, perhaps, that there is a direct correlation between good attendance and good examination performance. I am pleased to say that attendance rates for the current year groups are good but clearly this needs to be maintained if pupils are to give themselves the best possible chance of achieving their potential.

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.

Other matters

Term Dates, Examinations and Parents' Evenings

These are printed below. Please keep them for reference.

Adult Education

Please find attached a list of available courses.

Year 6 and non-NTS Year 11 Open Evening

If friends of yours are parents with pupils currently in Year 6, please remind them that our Open Day is on Monday 14th 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. Please ask them to contact reception to arrange a tour.

Please note, too, that the evening is also for **non-NTS** Year 11 pupils and that a presentation will be given specifically to them (and their parents) in the Library at 6.30pm.

NTS pupils currently in Year 11 (and their parents) will be provided with information separately and in a different format.

Wigton Baths

An appeal from the Deputy Chair of Wigton Baths Trust: The *Crowdfund* plan to raise sufficient funds to buy solar panels for Wigton Baths did not reach its target. However, a few weeks after this enterprise began we were made aware of a competition run by M&S Energy. We were shortlisted and are now in the competition to win £12.5K to put Solar panels on the roof at Wigton Baths. Currently we are in the lead but need more votes to sustain the lead, and hopefully win. To vote please click on www.mandsenergyfund.com/project/28375 and vote to Power up Wigton.

Finally, I should take this opportunity as I always do 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