



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.

May 2016

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Having recently updated the Governors on various issues relating to the school and its development, I thought parents might appreciate a brief summary.

House System

We are developing a House System and this is due to be launched at the start of the academic year 2016. Heads of Year will remain in place for pastoral reasons but each year group will have two Houses (based on an 8-Form entry). Respective Form Tutors will be assigned to a House as will Heads of Year and the majority of the Senior Management Team. The sense of affiliation this will bring to the ethos of the school can only serve to strengthen it further. Currently we are working our way through the very long list of practical considerations such as division of Forms into different houses to ensure equality of numbers, allocation of House Points, how this will be entered into our systems and the names of the NTS Houses.

Curriculum

The government's introduction of new GCSE and A-Level specifications has presented many difficulties to all secondary schools but our subject leaders at NTS are working hard to prepare the new teaching material for delivery in September.

"Levelling" without "Levels"

Up until recently schools were expected to report 'levels' at certain key points of a child's education as they moved through Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9). The government's decision to abolish the levelling system has meant that all schools are now free to re-invent the wheel. We have deliberately taken our time to better understand the requirements of new Key Stage 4 qualifications before devising our new assessment system to be used across the school (Years 7 to 11). The model we have adopted is not revolutionary, but attempts to ground assessment in two basic principles:

- High quality teaching that incorporates best practice so that feedback and feed forward enable pupils to understand fully "what went well" (WWW) and how to make their work "even better if" (EBI) they make specific modifications to content, the demonstration of understanding and the use of certain skills.
- Robust GCSE-style summative assessments at mid-year and year end, with those outcomes defining pupil attainment and progress against GCSE targets, defined in GCSE terms.

The new model will define a pupil as making expected progress if they consistently achieve an attainment grade no less than their GCSE target grade, regardless of academic year. The new system comes into effect from September 2016.

English GCSE

In light of the English GCSE examination results last year, we devised a comprehensive strategy for improvement. We are on schedule to complete this and the process will be finished before the academic year is out. In addition to this improvement strategy, we have overstaffed in English and are also holding an English immersion day for all of the Year 11 pupils on 12th May with a view to focussing on the Unit 1 Language examination. The March mock

examination (which did not take into account controlled assessment) indicated a very healthy A*-C count, and ongoing controlled assessment intervention and resit work suggests that this figure will rise further. As is the case every year, grade boundaries set by the examination boards will ultimately determine the true fate of our Year 11 pupils in this subject and this cannot be determined in advance.

Building works

You may be aware that last year's flooding put our Peter Ireland Building (PIB) out of action. Work over the Easter Holidays has been carried out to investigate the problems with the building itself and the drainage systems. The problems have been identified now and work will start soon to repair the damage and to prevent the problem from reoccurring.

Finances and pupil numbers

The most recent indications show that pupil numbers for the new Year 7 intake in September will be around the 216 mark. Given that our in-catchment intake is predicted to be less than a hundred (due to low birth rates in the area), this is relatively good news and means that we will be returning to an 8-Form entry (current Year 7 and 9 are 7-Form entry).

Child Sexual Exploitation

Often referred to as CSE in the press, Child Sexual Exploitation is a growing issue in schools with the ever increasing use of social media which affords potential offenders anonymity and the risk to vulnerable young people cannot be underestimated. All staff have been briefed on the matter, in addition to a number of Governors. On the 3rd March, a production of "Chelsea's Choice" was shown to Year 10 as part of the school response to the problem. Ms Williams (Citizenship Coordinator) and a number of staff were in attendance in the hope that elements of the play will be transmitted to other year groups, age dependent. Last week PC Keith Hunton delivered CSE assemblies to the remaining year groups and feedback from pupils has been encouraging.

School Nurse

Mrs Postlethwaite is working in NTS for two days a week and has seen a number of pupils since she started this role in January. She has been involved in staff training and will assist with the numerous medical plans we have in place. The recently introduced drop-in sessions have proved to be successful.

School Meals

Prices in the School canteen are due to increase when we return after the May half-term. The daily free meal allowance will also increase from £2.50 to £2.65 to ensure that those pupils who qualify for free meals are not affected by the price rise.

Parental Survey Choosing a Secondary School

Mr Beechey, Assistant Head, recently asked for feedback from Year 7 parents on which factors influenced their choice of secondary school. A wide range of reasons were highlighted with the most influential being the Quality of Teaching. Other key influences stated in the survey were our Ofsted judgment, our traditional approach to education, the presence of siblings already in our school, the management of the school and our examination results. When we asked which communication source influenced parents, the number one factor was the Open Evening presentation followed by the additional day-time tours which were introduced two years ago. Other major factors were word-of-mouth communication between parents and walking around the school on Open Evening. Some parents provided further written comments which have proved useful.

School Production

The summary that Mrs Carroll wrote in a recent edition of the newsletter more than covers the detail but I should add here how delighted I was with the performance I saw. The pupils and staff involved did themselves and NTS enormous credit and I was reminded once again how fortunate we are to have such talented and hard-working members of our school. In addition to Mrs Carroll, I should also mention the Head of Music, Mrs Raven, here and the exceptional quality of the orchestral accompaniment.

Young Enterprise

Miss Walker, Head of Business Studies and Economics, will no doubt be writing an article on Young Enterprise for the next newsletter but I thought you should know in advance that our team this year, "Eduvation", attended the county finals in Carlisle on 4th May. Although we have often won this event in the past and have grown accustomed to success, the competition appeared to be particularly stiff this year and as the subsidiary prizes were being announced, we were beginning to think that our winning streak had come to an end. That was until the final announcement was made: the team from NTS were the overall winners – *again!* All the students involved performed

brilliantly on the night and thoroughly deserved the victory and once again, I am indebted to Miss Walker and Innovia's Gill Cullen for the time and effort they put into assisting the students.

Sixth-Form Information Evening (1st March)

Partly in response to feedback from some parents, we decided to change the format of this event and were extremely pleased with what proved to be a very successful evening this year. We had a packed house and following excellent presentations from Mr Parker and Mr Walker, Heads of Department (with support from other members of staff) then spoke enthusiastically about their subjects to parents/pupils as they toured parts of the school. Sixth-formers gave brief talks to the audience, too, and were on hand to guide our visitors around the site. I am particularly grateful to those colleagues who gave up 1½ hours of their time in a busy week to speak to our visitors and to provide them with the information they sought, and to our smartly dressed sixth-formers, some of whom patiently stood outside in the cold and the drizzle, politely ushering our visitors around.

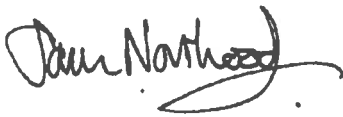
School Trips

Although the regular newsletters you receive provide you with the necessary detail, I thought I would draw attention here to the success of the four trips run in the Easter holidays: Mr Smith (History) ran his usual trip to Berlin, Ms Reynolds (Geography) ran another trip to Iceland, Miss Lane (MFL) ran a new trip to Spain and Ms Peart (Maths) ran a trip to London. I would like to reiterate what these staff themselves have said about the smooth-running of each trip and the immaculate behaviour of the pupils involved. But I also need to stress here how appreciative I am of their time, effort and commitment, and for once again going well beyond the call of duty for the benefit of the pupils at this school.

Prevent Duty Information Leaflet

Please find enclosed an information leaflet produced by an outside company that the government is using to inform parents about the Prevent Duty, with which all schools have to comply.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Northwood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mr DS Northwood
Headmaster

Where to go for more information

Contact the school

If you have any questions or concerns about the Prevent strategy and what it means for your child, please do not hesitate to contact the school.

See our policies

You will find more details about radicalisation in our safeguarding policy, available on our website.

We also have information about spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values.

External sources

The following sources may also be useful for further information:

Prevent duty guidance: for England and Wales, HM Government

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417943/Prevent_Duty_Guidance_England_Wales.pdf

Frequently asked questions, Prevent For Schools
http://www.preventforschools.org/?category_id=38

What is Prevent? Let's Talk About It
<http://www.ltai.info/what-is-prevent/>

The Prevent strateg

The Key provides trusted leadership and management support to schools.

What is the Prevent strategy?

Prevent is a government strategy designed to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorist or extremist causes.

The Prevent strategy covers all types of terrorism and extremism, including the extreme right wing, violent Islamist groups and other causes.

How does the Prevent strategy apply to schools?

From July 2015 all schools (as well as other organisations) have a duty to safeguard children from radicalisation and extremism.

This means we have a responsibility to protect children from extremist and violent views the same way we protect them from drugs or gang violence.

Importantly, we can provide a safe place for pupils to discuss these issues so they better understand how to protect themselves.

What does this mean in practice?

Many of the things we already do in school to help children become positive, happy members of society also contribute to the Prevent strategy.

These include:

- Exploring other cultures and religions and promoting diversity
- Challenging prejudices and racist comments
- Developing critical thinking skills and a strong, positive self-identity
- Promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils, as well as British values such as democracy

We will also protect children from the risk of radicalisation, for example by using filters on the internet to make sure they can't access extremist and terrorist material, or by vetting visitors who come into school to work with pupils.

Different schools will carry out the Prevent duty in different ways, depending on the age of the children and the needs of the community.

Frequently Asked Questions

How does Prevent relate to British values?

Schools have been required to promote British values since 2014, and this will continue to be part of our response to the Prevent strategy.

British values include:

- Democracy
- The rule of law
- Individual liberty and mutual respect
- Tolerance of different faiths and beliefs

Isn't my child too young to learn about extremism?

The Prevent strategy is not just about discussing extremism itself, which may not be appropriate for younger children. It is also about teaching children values such as tolerance and mutual respect.

The school will make sure any discussions are suitable for the age and maturity of the children involved.

Is extremism really a risk in our area?

Extremism can take many forms, including political, religious and misogynistic extremism. Some of these may be a bigger threat in our area than others.

We will give children the skills to protect them from any extremist views they may encounter, now or later in their lives.

KEY TERMS

Extremism – vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values such as democracy, the rule of law and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs

Ideology – a set of beliefs

Terrorism – a violent action against people or property, designed to create fear and advance a political, religious or ideological cause

Radicalisation – the process by which a person comes to support extremism and terrorism