



The Nelson Thomlinson School
Wigton
Cumbria
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...still "outstanding"
(Ofsted, May 2013)

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

July 2016

Dear Parents,

As the end of the year draws ever closer, I felt I should write to update you on a few matters.

Staffing

At the end of the term, we will be saying farewell to a number of colleagues. In alphabetical order, they are:

Miss A Beattie (English) who is moving to Ireland
Ms P Clay (RE/Sociology) who is moving to Scotland
Mr L Heap (Maths HLTA) whose temporary contract comes to an end
Mr A Jones (Head of Section, KS4) who is retiring after 33 years of dedicated service
Mr D Noble (Science) who is moving to the North-East

In September, we will be welcoming the following new staff:

Miss S Bailey (History), maternity cover for Dr Henley
Miss R Denham (Maths), replacing Mrs Wightman who left last July and has since been covered by Mrs Allin
Miss R Hatton (Science), replacing Mr Noble
Mr D Heagarty (Science)
Mr D Jackson (Geography), maternity cover for Miss C Farmer
Miss R Morley (English) who will be covering Mrs G Cole-Priddle's maternity leave from September/October
Ms L Sunman (RE/Sociology), maternity cover for Mrs N Dixon
Mrs T Webb-Rodgers (English)

And the following are taking on new roles:

Mrs G Allin (Maths HLTA) whose temporary position has been made permanent
Mr Steven Knott as our new Head of Year, replacing Mr Hetherington who is stepping down
Ms K Puskar, Mr N McConnell & Miss J Southwell as the new Assistant Heads of Year (all internal appointments)

NUT Strike Action

Recent strike action by the NUT meant that a number of members of staff did not come in to school on Tuesday 5th July. Fortunately, we were able on this occasion to plug the holes and managed to keep the school open for all year groups.



School Nurse

Mrs Postlethwaite began her tenure in school at the New Year and has proved an invaluable resource for the pupils in school. Her close links with local doctors ensure signposting to services is speedy and effective. In the last six months Mrs Postlethwaite has met with pupils in timetabled sessions, held drop-in clinics, has assisted with first-aid issues and training and been involved in the dissemination of sexual health information.

House System

Whilst the year group system will remain a stalwart of the pastoral system in school, the injection of a House System across KS3 and 4 will serve to enrich NTS life for our pupils. For several weeks in every term there are House Activity weeks calendared which will involve a range of tasks and initiatives which span from the sporting to the practical and also include tests of initiative. Competitions will appeal to all manner and means of pupils and the vertical nature of events will ensure teams' skills are developed further. The Houses have been named after birds of prey which can be found in the locality: Kestrel, Merlin, Peregrine and Osprey whose respective colours are red, green, yellow and blue. All pupils have been allocated to a House as have teachers and teaching assistants. The first three weeks of events are due to commence at the end of September, and everyone's competitive spirit is coming to the fore.

Uniform

Some of you may be wishing to purchase new uniform for your children over the summer. Please be aware that we have a strict uniform policy, which states that **“girls must wear a black, tailored skirt or classically-tailored plain black trousers. (Jeans, flares, and “skinny” and high-fashion trousers are not acceptable.)”**

NTS Facebook Page

With the use of social media constantly on the increase, and following requests from some parents, we have taken the decision to set up a Facebook page for NTS. Here we will post letters, newsletters, trip information and travel disruptions - and lots more as the page develops. We hope this will provide an easier and more convenient way for some of you to receive communications from us. The Link is: www.facebook.com/TheNelsonThomlinsonSchool. For non-Facebook users our school website will continue to be updated with the latest letters, newsletters etc.

New KS3 assessment procedures

The essence of the school system with regards to pupil attainment and progress is a cycle of:

- Targets – Set to be challenging and aspirational
- Assessment – Formative and summative that is appropriate and robust
- Tracking – Measuring progress towards targets
- Monitoring – Analysing pupil achievement at individual and group level
- Intervention – Enabling pupils identified through monitoring to achieve
- Review – Holding the school, departments and individuals to account

As we head into the 2016 academic year, one of the single biggest changes to secondary school education needs to be addressed, namely the abolishment of National Curriculum Levels and the implementation of a new system for assessment over which all schools have been given free rein to create in order to meet their unique school contexts.

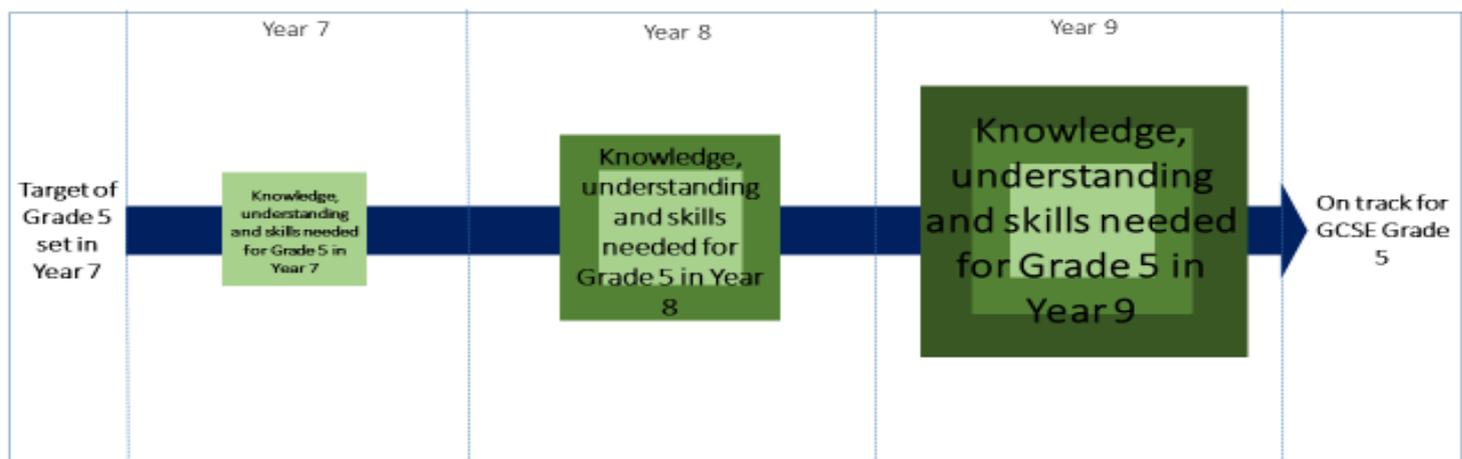
For NTS, the time is now right to change. As Year 6 pupils prepare to join us, we have been busy preparing how to use the new performance data that accompanies them, and how to tie that into expectations for future performance with GCSE qualifications taken at the end of KS4 moving to a new grading system of 1 (lowest) to 9 (highest).

A very big job of work is being undertaken to re-define the KS3 curriculum in each subject so that it accommodates the changing demands placed on pupils at both KS2 and KS4. In the light of this, the new assessment system demands simplicity in order to achieve robustness and rigour in the accuracy with which pupil outcomes are judged.

The KS3 Assessment System Diagram illustrates the process, which will be as follows:

1. Targets – All pupils will receive a target in the form of their most likely expected GCSE grade on the new 1 to 9 scale
2. Teacher and pupils will work as usual in lessons, with pupils receiving verbal and written feedback on their work, and carrying out peer and self-assessment. This is the process known as ‘assessment for learning (AfL)’ and takes place through class and homework.
3. At two points in the year, a summative assessment, or exam will be taken, the first testing the first half year’s learning and the second testing the whole year’s learning.
4. School ‘data dips’ will track and monitor the progress of pupils whereby:
 - a. Pupils will be making expected progress if their current grade matches their target grade
 - b. Pupils will be making less than expected progress if their current grade is less than their target grade
 - c. Pupils will be making more than expected progress if their current grade is higher than their target grade
5. Teacher judgement from AfL work will be used to moderate the outcome from the first summative assessment, but in the second, only the score from that exam will be used to provide the current grade. This is because we are heading into linear GCSE courses, assessed only at the end of two year’s work, through examination only (in most subjects).
The key point of this system is that to maintain expected progress, a pupil has to achieve the same grade each year. However, the standard required to achieve that same grade each year will increase with each year, leading up to the standard required for the GCSE exams in Year 11.

Visual representation of the KS3 assessment principle



Each year, new knowledge, understanding and skills competence will be added, and tested alongside that already learned in previous years. You will understand why we see AfL as being the most important aspect of any assessment process, as pupils will need to master their understanding in lessons with teacher guidance before being required to demonstrate that mastery when answering exam questions under exam conditions.

For the new Year 7 intake, this should be a system that is easy to adapt to, as pupils in this year group haven't worked in levels for some time.

For the new Year 8 and Year 9, we will use all the prior, current and future attainment and progress data to re-set targets in the new structure, being mindful that there is no direct correlation from an old NC level to a new GCSE grade. In other words, 'three levels of progress' from KS2 to KS4 no longer exists whereby a Year 6 pupil with Level 4b in English would be expected to achieve a GCSE grade C. The nearest we have is that a pupil in Year 6 who is 'secondary ready' with a scaled score of 100 should be expected to secure a Grade 5 at GCSE. Our understanding is that in 'old money', this equates more readily to 'four levels of progress'.

Early in September, I will be sending further details of the changes to our systems, including a date for an information evening where I will be available to present the new system to you in full, and answer any queries you may have. By the end of September, a booklet showing the expected standard of working for Grades 1, 4 and 7 in each subject in Year 7, 8 and 9 respectively will be published on the school website.

I remind you that pupils return to school on **Monday 5th September**. Thank you for your continued support of the school and I hope you all have a very enjoyable summer.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Northwood". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Mr DS Northwood
Headmaster