



**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.**

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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 decent weather has clearly helped and it has been nice to see so many happy faces out on the fields at break and lunchtimes. The first letter I send to all parents at the start of the new academic year is always rather lengthy (5 pages) simply because there is a lot of information to disseminate.

**There are also some important instructions for you to follow, if you would be so kind, and to make things easier for you I have highlighted them in text boxes like this one.**

#### Examination Results

At Nelson Thomlinson, **AS and A-Level results** have always been impressive and this year was no exception. We are particularly pleased with the students' average points score of 965, which is likely to rank once again amongst the very best in the county.

26% of all entries were A or A\*. Out of a cohort of 104 we had 17 students who gained 3 or more A/A\* grades and 9 students who gained 4 or more A/A\* grades. William Bayliff was successful in gaining his place at Wadham College, Oxford, to read Maths, Kate Hoyles was successful in gaining her place at Wadham College, Oxford, to read Spanish and Portuguese, Bethan Spencer was successful in gaining her place at St Hugh's, Oxford, to read English, ex-student Adam Story was successful in gaining his place at Queen's College, Oxford, to read Fine Art, Jack Watson was successful in gaining his place at Christ Church, Oxford, to read Maths, and Sarah Wolstencroft was successful in gaining her place at Girton College, Cambridge, to read Natural Sciences. For the first time ever we also had a student, Owen Ogden, who was successful in gaining a place at the prestigious Yale University in the States. This total of 7 successful students is the best 'Oxbridge' result in the history of the school. There are now 12 old Wigtonians at Oxbridge - and 1 at Yale! It is also worth noting that two of our students were accepted on veterinary medicine courses, Ellie Skelhorn at Nottingham University and Emily Turnbull at Bristol University.

The indications are that all of our students have been successful in securing their offers for university, apprenticeships or work-related training. Although this is a regular occurrence these days, it is no mean feat, 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.

In terms of **GCSE results**, we are delighted that 68% of our Year 11 pupils achieved 5 A\*-C grades *including English and Maths*. Unlike previous years, schools are now required by the Department for Education to publicise a figure that includes pupils gaining a C or above in English Literature or Language, rather than just Language. This means that it is much harder to compare this year's

results with those of previous years. Whether or not we take this 'shifting of the goal-posts' into account, it is clear that the school's GCSE performance this year is much better than that of last year (by at least 8%) and is very much back in line with the usual patterns and trends of the last decade or so.

An impressive 74% achieved 5 or more A\*-C grades irrespective of the subjects they studied. 33% of pupils gained a full English Baccalaureate and 23% of all entries were A\*/A. Out of a cohort of 219, the following 10 pupils deserve a special mention for gaining a full suite of A/A\*\*s: Lucy Reynolds, Matthew Ostridge, Sophie Connolly, Paige Wardle, Ellie Shipp, Edward Willis, Emma Wolstencroft, Joe Whitehead, Katie Twentyman and Sarah Paterson. Many congratulations to the pupils and staff!

### The New House System

This term hails the return of a House System to NTS after several decades. House Assemblies are calendared for the second week of term and the member of senior staff in charge of each House will deliver a central message outlining specific activities for the year, allocation of House Points (HPs) and how they are redeemed by pupils. There are various events due to commence at the beginning of October which will appeal to pupils across the board. Activities range from Tent Pitch and Master Chef to the team building event, Nightline, all of which are being run by staff volunteers, assisted by sixth-form students.

Pupils will receive HPs for excellent pieces of work, improved outcomes, charitable endeavours, courteousness, sporting events, musical contributions and being a role model to others in NTS. All staff have been allocated a House and will wear the same coloured badges as the pupils. Each House is named after a bird of prey and art work representing these birds is visible on screens around school, having been created by Tom Garner, a sixth-form student.

As Christmas approaches, pupil reports will include a sheet on House Point successes. As the year progresses, the competition for the House Cup will gather momentum and pupils will be able to celebrate their individual successes in addition to that of their House.

### Learning

The ability to read confidently has a direct effect upon academic success and general confidence and motivation in school. It is for this reason that developing the literacy of our pupils continues to be a fundamental priority at the school and is once again on the School Development Plan for this year.

Amongst other things, we will be using research to improve pupils' reading standards and the strategies teachers use. Teachers and Teaching Assistants will be trained to use consistent approaches to reading. Year 7 pupils will complete a brief dictation exercise early in the first term to create a benchmark and reference point for all teachers in all subjects, and there will be guided reading sessions for those who require additional support. Year 11s will receive additional English intervention to help them achieve their target grades, with lunchtime sessions and Form Time Literacy being introduced. The new House system will help us create a competitive platform for pupils keen to improve their literacy skills, with 'spelling bees' and other competitions in the pipeline. There will also be a closer link between the English and Learning Support Departments.

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.**

We offer, free of charge, small group or one-to-one tuition for any Year 7 pupil who enters the school with less than the equivalent of 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. 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.

### Homework

I have asked staff once again to ensure that the purpose of each task that they set is appropriate. Whilst I have also asked them to stick to the homework timetable and to set it regularly, I have also told them this year not to set tasks just for the sake of it.

**If you, as parents, feel that the homework your child is receiving is not appropriate for whatever reason, please address your concerns to the school immediately.**

### Staff changes

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

**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 has stepped down  
**Ms K Puskar, Mr N McConnell & Miss J Southwell** as the new Assistant Heads of Year (all internal appointments)

I am also pleased to announce that Miss Calvo got married and so did Miss Hands, the latter choosing to change her title to Mrs Nixon.

### 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 27 <sup>th</sup> September	(receiving Year 10 prizes)
Year 10	Monday 26 <sup>th</sup> September	(receiving Year 9 prizes)
Year 9	Wednesday 28 <sup>th</sup> September	(receiving Year 8 prizes)
Year 8	Thursday 29 <sup>th</sup> September	(receiving Year 7 prizes)

We will hold our formal senior prize ceremony for the Sixth Form on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> 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.

### Building works

I am pleased to inform you that the Peter Ireland Building is now back up and running – as normal – following the flood damage caused by Storm Desmond. I am grateful to the PE staff and the pupils for their patience, and to the Site Team, especially Graeme Wharldall, for their part in speeding along the repair of the building. In other areas of the school we have had new carpets fitted as well as new lighting in the main hall and some of the classrooms. CCTV has been updated in key areas and many of the rooms and corridors have been re-painted.

### Data Collection Sheet (just for Y7 and new pupils from other year groups)

**The Data Collection Sheet will be issued shortly. Please amend or complete this as appropriate. (PARENTS OF YEAR 7 PUPILS ONLY)**

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. 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.

**You are therefore required to complete the Digital/Video Images Permission slip. (PARENTS OF YEAR 7 PUPILS ONLY)**

Additional Data Collection for the Department for Education (DfE) census (ALL pupils)

We have recently been notified by the DfE that they require information regarding pupil nationality and country of birth to be submitted to them as part of the termly census.

**I am therefore attaching a sheet which I would be grateful if you would complete and return as soon as possible. (PARENTS OF ALL PUPILS)**

Naturally, as with all other data, this will be held in accordance with the requirements of the Data Collection Act 1998.

E-safety (All NEW pupils)

Last year we completed a thorough review of our e-safety policy. All pupils will discuss and sign the school's policy in their planner.

**Please sign the Parent/Carer e-safety policy issued with the Data Collection Sheet and return as soon as possible. (PARENTS OF ALL NEW PUPILS)**

Lost Property

The School Office receives large amounts of lost property that we are unable to return to the owners because items are not named. This is a shame as it means extra expense for parents to buy replacements.

**Therefore, please can I remind you that you should clearly name each item of uniform, sports kit and any other clothing brought to school, preferably with a name tape but otherwise in a marker pen that will not fade in the wash.**

All items of lost property are kept in the school office for a half-term and are then disposed of, either to the clothes bank or to a charity shop.

**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 or near the school gates - 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 and a 5mph speed limit 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

Pupils generally look very smart at the moment. In fact, school uniform continues to be a source of pride in NTS. However, the fashion trend towards **skinny-leg trousers** in all the high street shops is

frustrating and whilst the choice of tailored trousers for girls is limited, 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](http://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.

##### 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 12<sup>th</sup> September and that presentations delivered by the Senior Management Team start at 6.30pm (repeated at 7.15pm).**

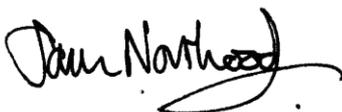
Self-guided tours are available that evening, or with a member of the Senior Management Team during the school day on Monday to Friday of that week. Please ask them to contact reception to arrange a tour. **NTS pupils currently in Year 11 (and their parents) will be provided with information regarding the Sixth Form separately and in a different format.**

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

## **Holidays 2016-17**

Half term Monday 24th – Friday 28th October

Christmas Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December – Wednesday 4th January (Staff INSET Wednesday 4th)

Half term Monday 20th – Friday 24th February

Easter Monday 10<sup>th</sup> – Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April

Half term Monday 29th May– Friday 2nd June

Summer Friday 22nd July

## **Parents' Evenings**

Monday 12th September Y6 and non-NTS Sixth Form Open Evening

Monday 3rd October Y7 Form Tutors meet some parents (mainly by invitation)

Wednesday 2nd November Y11 Parents' Study Skills Meeting

Thursday 3rd November Y13 Parents' Evening

Monday 7th November Y12 Parents' Evening

Thursday 17th November Y11 Parents' Evening

Monday 28th November Y8 Parents' Evening (NELST)

Thursday 8th December Y8 Parents' Evening (HMW)

Tuesday 10th January Y11 6th Form Information Evening

Monday 16th January Y7 Parents' Evening (NELST)

Thursday 26th January Y7 Parents' Evening (HMWG)

Thursday 2nd February Y10 Parents' Evening

Monday 6th March Y9 Parents' Evening (NELST)

Thursday 16th March Y9 Parents' Evening (HMWG)

Monday 3rd July New Y7 Parents' Information Evening

Thursday 6th July HE & Careers Information Evening for Y12 Parents

## **Exams**

Week beginning Monday 26th September Y7 CAT tests

Week beginning 31st October Y11 Art Mock exam (provisional)

Tuesday 1st November GCSE English resits

Wednesday 2nd & Friday 4th November GCSE Maths resits

Weeks beginning Monday 28th November & 5th December Y11 Mocks

Week beginning Monday 9th January Y12 Mocks

Week beginning Monday 16th January Y13 Mocks

Week beginning Monday 13th March Y11 Maths and English Mock

Week beginning Monday 24th and Tuesday 25th April GCSE Art exam

Week beginning Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> – Friday 28th April A-level Art exam

Weeks beginning Tuesday 2nd & 8th May Y10 Mocks

Monday 15th May Y12 Study Leave starts (return 20th June provisional)

Monday 15th May – Thursday 29th June GCSE exams (provisional) & AS & A2 exams (provisional)

Week beginning Monday 5th June Y7 exams

Week beginning Monday 12th June Y8 exams

Week beginning Monday 19th June Y9 exams