



The Nelson Thomlinson School
Wigton
Cumbria
CA7 9PX

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

Tel: 016973 42160
Fax: 016973 49160
Email: admin@nts.cumbria.sch.uk
www.nts.cumbria.sch.uk

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

September 2017

Dear Parents

Now that the first few days are over, I am pleased to find time to write to you all and update you on recent news and events.

The start of the new term has gone smoothly and, as ever, it is great to see the new Year 7s settling in. **If friends of yours are parents with pupils currently in Year 6, please remind them that our Open Day is on Monday 11th September and that presentations delivered by the Senior Management Team start at 6.30pm (repeated at 7.15pm).** They are free to look around the site that evening, and tours are available 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 separately and in a different format.**

It is typically the case that the first letter I send to all parents at the start of the new academic year contains a lot of information and also some important instructions.

To make things easier for you I have highlighted any instructions in a text box like this one.

Examination Results

This year there have been major changes to the examination system, especially at GCSE, and, as you may have read in the local press, it is important not to draw too many conclusions at this very early stage. Generally speaking, though, in the light of all the information we have to hand, we are very encouraged by the results.

In terms of **GCSE results**, the headline figure that we normally share with parents at the beginning of the new academic year is the percentage of last year's Year 11 pupils who achieved 5 A*-C grades including English and Maths. Direct comparisons are no longer possible because English and Maths have a new grading system (9-1). However, if one assumes (as the government has done) that the new grade 4 is equivalent to the lower end of an old grade C (a "Standard Pass"), then our headline figure would read as follows: 75% of Year 11 pupils achieved 5 A*-C/9-4 grades ("Standard Passes") including English and Maths - and this is clearly a cause for celebration. In fact, one could argue that it constitutes our best result ever. An impressive 81% achieved 5 or more A*-C/9-4 grades irrespective of the subjects they studied, 33% of pupils gained a full English Baccalaureate and 23% of all entries were A*/A or 8/9. Misha Atkinson and Alana Halpin deserve a special mention for gaining a full suite of A/A*'s and 8/9 in English and Maths. Many congratulations to the 217 pupils who took GCSE examinations last year and all the staff who taught them!

At **AS and A Level** it is no longer possible to calculate the students' average points score (which has, for us, always been one of the highest in the county). Other figures that we *have been* able to

calculate are largely in line with those of previous years: 25% of all entries were A or A*, and out of a cohort of 119 we had fourteen students who gained 3 or more A/A* grades and nine who gained 4 or more A/A* grades. Stefan Clarke was successful in gaining his place at St John's College, Oxford, to read Maths, and Adam Ferguson was successful in gaining his place at Keble College, Oxford, to read Computer Science. There are now nine old Wigtonians at Oxford University, one at Cambridge and one at Yale University in the United States. It is also worth noting that one of our students, Simone Simpson, was accepted on a veterinary medicine course 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. As ever I would like to thank the students for their efforts in securing their grades but also the staff involved in helping them reach their potential and their destinations of choice – particularly Mr Walker, Dr Lovegrove and Mrs Pearson.

Equipment for Learning (E4L)

In response to the recent one-to-one conversations I conducted with staff last term, I have decided to introduce something called E4L as part of this year's School Development Plan. Form Tutors have been directed to check that all pupils have the following 8 items of equipment at the start of the day:

- Blue/black writing pen (+ 1 spare)
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Rubber
- Two other coloured writing pens (ideally red and green)
- Protractor
- Calculator
- Pair of compasses

The majority of these items are sold in the Maths Office at a very reasonable rate.

All pupils have been told by me in assemblies that they will have until Monday 11th September to get themselves organised on this front and that the equipment will then be checked every day for one week, and then on random days thereafter. There will be sanctions from Monday 18th for those who do not have the equipment listed above.

We have found that some pupils are held back in their learning as a consequence of being poorly equipped and/or forgetting things, and this recent initiative is designed to address the problem. I hope that you as parents will be able to support us here and help your child become fit for learning.

Departmental Detentions

Unfortunately, there are instances when it is necessary to detain pupils during the lunch hour because classroom expectations/standards have not been met. Should an individual fail to attend a detention, a letter will be sent to parents informing them of an after-school detention; usually at least 48 hours' notice is given to allow for transport arrangements, if necessary. All pupils are aware of the expectations of departments in NTS and how this sanction can be avoided in the first instance.

Literacy

The ability to read confidently has a direct effect on 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.

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 considerably less than the expected standardised score in English or Maths at the end of Key Stage 2. 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.

Independence and Active Engagement

As a school we always seek to encourage pupils to develop skills and attributes that are not only helpful for exams but are also useful for life. This year our staff are promoting pupil independence and their active engagement in learning. We are challenging pupils to be proactive about their learning but we also recognise that some pupils may need some support in becoming more independent. We want pupils to understand that it is normal to find things difficult and to have to work out or find out an answer. You can support this focus at home by talking to your child about their learning and encouraging them to work through problems before giving them an answer. Inside school, whilst we are proud of the excellent behaviour in lessons, we are also conscious that a silent pupil is not necessarily one who is learning. Teachers therefore plan activities to encourage the involvement of all pupils in lessons.

Staff changes

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

Miss C Holden (Teacher of Modern Foreign Languages)

Mrs L Lynn (Part-time teacher of Music)

Mr N Foster (PE Technician/Administrative Assistant)

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 26 th September	(receiving Year 10 prizes)
Year 10	Monday 25 th September	(receiving Year 9 prizes)
Year 9	Wednesday 27 th September	(receiving Year 8 prizes)
Year 8	Thursday 28 th September	(receiving Year 7 prizes)

We will hold our formal senior prize ceremony for the Sixth Form on Friday 29th 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.

Friends of Nelson Thomlinson School (FoNTS)/PTA

There will be a meeting in the Library on 20th September at 6.30pm for current and **prospective new members** of our PTA. Please come and see what they do.

Building works

During the summer break the main building work carried out was the conversion L7 from a Technology classroom to a standard classroom. We have also undertaken some enhancements to the Science prep rooms including the renovation of the existing prep room and the creation of an additional prep room on the ground floor. Other works included external painting of House Block, new boilers in J block, new fascia boards on the three story building and the installation of a secure access system for the main reception.

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 AND NEW 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 AND NEW PUPILS ONLY)

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 with a marker pen such that the name 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 - 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.** The entry is adjacent to the bus-bay and the exit is onto the High Street. Please also remember that we have a barrier in place during the following times: **8.30 – 9.15am; 11.05 – 11.30am; 12.20 – 1.35pm; 3.25 – 4.00pm**
- 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 may be asked to change any unsuitable trousers, and we

will provide details of local stockists who sell trousers that are in line with the uniform regulations 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.

Term Dates, Examinations and Parents' Evenings

These are printed below. Please keep them for reference.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Northwood', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mr DS Northwood
Headmaster

Holidays 2017-18

Half term Monday 23rd – Friday 27th October
Christmas Monday 18th December – Wednesday 3rd January (Staff CPD Wednesday 3rd)

Half term Monday 12th – Friday 16th February
Easter Friday 30th March – Friday 13th April

Half term Monday 28th May– Friday 1st June
Summer Monday 23rd July

Parents' Evenings

Monday 11 th September	Y6 and non-NTS Sixth Form Open Evening
Monday 2 nd October	Y7 Form Tutors meet some parents (mainly by invitation)
Thursday 19 th October	Y13 Parents' Evening
Wednesday 1 st November	Y11 Parents' Study Skills Meeting
Thursday 9 th November	Y12 Parents' Evening
Thursday 16 th November	Y11 Parents' Evening
Monday 27 th November	Y8 Parents' Evening (NELST)
Thursday 7 th December	Y8 Parents' Evening (HMW)
Tuesday 9 th January	Y11 6th Form Information Evening
Monday 15 th January	Y7 Parents' Evening (NELST)
Thursday 25 th January	Y7 Parents' Evening (HMWG)
Thursday 1 st February	Y10 Parents' Evening
Monday 5 th March	Y9 Parents' Evening (NELST)
Monday 12 th March	Y9 Parents' Evening (HMW)
Monday 2 nd July	New Y7 Parents' Information Evening
Thursday 5 th July	HE & Careers Information Evening for Y12 Parents

Exams

Week beginning Monday 25 th September	Y7 CAT tests
Wednesday 1 st & Friday 3 rd November	GCSE English resits
Thursday 2 nd , Monday 6 th & Wednesday 8 th November	GCSE Maths resits
Thursday 2 nd November	Y11 Art Mock exam
Weeks beginning Monday 27 th November & 4 th December	Y11 Mocks
Week beginning Monday 15 th January March	Y13 Mocks Y11 Maths and English Mocks (dates to be determined)
Week beginning Monday 12 th March	Y10 Art exam
Wednesday 18 th – Friday 20 th April Monday 23 rd & Tuesday 24 th April	A-level Art exam GCSE Art exam
Weeks beginning Monday 30 th April and Tuesday 8 th May	Y10 Mocks
Monday 14 th May – Monday 25 th June	GCSE and A-level exams (provisional)
Week beginning Monday 4 th June	Y7 exams
Week beginning Monday 11 th June	Y8 exams
Week beginning Monday 18 th June	Y9 exams
Week beginning Monday 25 th June	Y12 Mocks