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**Headmaster:**  
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Dear Parents/Carers,

It has been a while since I wrote to you all. Yes, we send ParentMail messages frequently and in a timely manner, I hope, with key reminders and instructions to those who need them, but rarely do these soundbites communicate my impressions of life at NTS or more general reflections on recent events here. COVID also got in the way, understandably, I think, but now that things have settled down a little in this regard, I should like to resume normal service. This letter, then, gives me an opportunity to update you on one or two things and to share my views on certain matters.

### **Staffing**

Inevitably, as the year draws to an end, we have some staff turnover and this year is no exception. We will of course be sad to see staff leave, but we also welcome the new arrivals. Whilst the shoes of so many of our departing colleagues can never be filled, we always aim to recruit staff who are at least as good as those leaving; this is bound to put pressure on our new recruits (!), but we wish them the very best of luck in their new roles here. I am also pleased to say that despite some very last-minute changes, we are fully staffed for September (no mean feat in this day and age, with more staff leaving the profession than joining it), and timetabling is also now complete. In terms of the latter, I am very grateful indeed to Mr Holgate and his team for the work they do on this front. Once again, they have solved the ultimate mathematical problem and provided a first-class solution.

In terms of staffing, you should firstly be aware that Elaine Lynch (labour councillor for Wigton, former Head of Sixth Form here and former Mayor of Wigton) has chosen to step down as Co-Chair of Governors (but retain her seat on the Board) so that she can devote more time to her role in the political arena. **Adrian Lloyd**, parent of a current Year 11 pupil, has kindly stepped up to the plate to replace her and with immediate effect, to join the remaining Co-Chair, Michael Cowen.

Teaching/Non-teaching staff changes are as follows:

#### **Leavers:**

**Mr Brockbank** (Teacher of Science) has been part of the very fabric of this school, and those teachers and parents who know him and current and former pupils will be especially sad to see him leave. He has chosen to retire after 17 years of exceptional service having thrown his heart and soul into NTS, devoted many additional hours to teaching his charges and inspired them through all manner of extra-curricular activities. Many who have been taught by him and have since left the school continue to stay in touch with him, which in itself speaks volumes. Lively, dynamic and full of energy, he will be remembered as much for his whacky lessons as his intellect and expertise.

**Mr McConnell** (Teacher of Technology, Assistant Head of Key Stage 4) has chosen to move schools after 17 years of dedicated service. This was a difficult decision for him, prompted by a need for him to be closer to home. Like so many of our long-standing members of staff, he was fully “NTS-ed” in every sense of the word, a proud and

supportive member of the school community who gave his all to the job. He was extremely well liked by pupils and always seemed to get the best out of them, being strict on the one hand but treating them with respect on the other. We hope the move 'down south' makes life for him and his family a little easier, and we wish him well.

**Mr Eyrl** (Peripatetic teacher of Music) has been involved with the school for an astonishing 22 years. He has worked with sixth formers in organising the famous school Rock Nights and has been the area organiser for Rock School exams. As well as coaching individuals, he had a particular gift for getting pupils *together* to make music, which required him to be forever empathetic, kind and generous with his time. He will be sorely missed.

**Mr Lewis** (Teacher of Technology) left last month for personal and health-related reasons after 14 years of dedicated service. He was a genuine technology enthusiast and shared his passion for the subject with those he taught; he was also an expert in the field and could be relied upon as the 'go-to' person when it came to questions of an industrial/technological nature.

**Mr Plackett** (Teacher of PE and temporary Head of Year 11) was with us for just 4 years but made a significant impact during this time, both as a teacher and as a member of the pastoral team. I always thought he might be destined for bigger things, and it came as no surprise when he was successful in applying for a Head of PE job closer to home. We wish him well in his new post and will remember him for his energy, dedication and the respect he commanded as both a teacher and Head of Year.

**Miss Windwood** (RE/Sociology) has been with us for just 2 years and, like others, is moving to be closer to home. She was well respected by those whom she taught and was a dedicated and reliable colleague during her short spell with us. An excellent tennis player, she also made the most of these talents here at NTS coaching pupils at lunchtimes.

#### **New Appointments:**

Mr Broster	Head of Computing
Miss Cameron	Sociology/RE
Mr Connell	Technology (part time)
Mr Dodd	Computing (trainee teacher)
Mr Irving	Head of Year 10
Miss Jackson	TA, LSD
Miss McCann	Site Team (part time)
Mrs Puskar	Head of Year 8
Mr Smith	Technology
Mr Speakman	Pastoral Asst, Sixth Form/Asst HOY, KS4
Mr Stamp	PE/Asst HOY 8 & 9
Miss Suttle	TA, LSD
Mrs Wamsley	Science (part time)

#### **Contractual changes:**

Mr Cooper	Relinquishing Head of Department position
Miss Southwell	Relinquishing Head of Year position

#### **OFSTED**

You may know that neighbouring schools (primaries and secondaries) have undergone OFSTED inspection recently, some more successfully than others. It is clear from conversations I have had with my counterparts that the bar has very much been raised, with some schools being 'downgraded' as they try to meet to the new, stiffer requirements and expectations. We are confident that the school is in a better place than it was back in May 2013 (the date of our last inspection), but we are in no way complacent and are fully aware of the challenges we face in trying to secure the top grade.

## **Behaviour**

Generally speaking, pupil behaviour is extremely good at NTS and always has been. There have been one or two incidents of late that have required us to intervene and perhaps create the wrong impression: one fight between two pupils (which drew the attention of an unsightly swathe of pupil onlookers and some social media coverage); some rudeness and defiance towards some teachers by some individuals/groups of pupils; and some litter on the field. This is comparatively small fry in the grand scheme of things; other schools have much more significant issues to deal with and far more frequently. This said, for *us* all this was a very real concern, and prompted us to react immediately and implement a detailed, multi-pronged strategy to clamp down on the issues I have described.

As I write this in my office now, on a beautiful summer day, glancing across the fields to my left, I can see nothing but happy children playing and conversing with each other in an orderly, convivial manner. There is an informal football match taking place on a 'pitch' (delineated by new cones designed for this purpose and to make it safer for spectators), and I notice three pupils, with their Tutor, who have volunteered to set up a litter-picking club; they are now out there with gloves, black bin-bags and 'grabbers' for the job. As I go out there to compliment them, they greet me with a smile and a cheery 'Hi, sir!' Indeed, this is the picture I get whenever I walk round school these days, which I do two or three times a day, and those aforementioned 'isolated disturbances' are, thankfully, now just a distant memory – for the time being at least. All this does keep us on our toes, of course, and reminds us to be vigilant, and swift with our interventions. Either way, please do not get a false impression based on rumour, hearsay or social media; I am more than happy to show you the 'real NTS' in action should you need convincing that this is indeed a very safe and a very happy school.

## **School Exams**

We are obviously in the midst of GCSE and A-level examinations, and end-of-year examinations have also started. Miss Hanabury and Mrs Tait deserve special mention here: the former is new to the role this year and has taken to it like a duck to water; Mrs Tait has constantly been at her side assisting and advising. I cannot begin to describe the complexity of the task assigned to these colleagues, and yet they have risen to the challenge with aplomb. (Both have been flat out for weeks now.) I should also thank all those who invigilate; this includes members of teaching and non-teaching staff who do this unpaid in their free time. This is an opportune moment, too, to wish all those taking exams all the very best as the process draws to a close. Thank you, parents, too, for your support of your charges; I know from first-hand experience that it is an especially stressful time for all concerned. There is at least some light at the end of the tunnel now...

## **Ukrainian refugees**

We were quick to react when we had a phone call relating to the imminent arrival of our first Ukrainian child. In the absence of guidelines from the government, we had to think on our feet and come up with a plan to integrate her into our community. Since then, two others have arrived and, whilst we still come up against hurdles, we are increasingly feeling like experts in the field. Most importantly, the three children have settled in well and I am indebted to the team of support staff (and NTS pupils) who have been instrumental in the pupils' induction. I have just heard that a fourth pupil will be joining us on Monday. Our new friends are currently making the most of English lessons delivered by a Ukrainian teacher, various apps on electronic devices and buddies who support them with the daily routines.

## **Year 5 Primary Experience Days**

I shall not list here all the staff involved in this extravaganza having already thanked them in a recent meeting. Suffice to say that we had 160 pupils from primary schools visit us last week, and our 20 staff did an especially fine job of entertaining them. I lost track of the number of compliments we had from parents, pupils and primary school

teachers; Mr Beechey and Mrs Pearson masterminded the event and these two colleagues in particular deserve my thanks and congratulations for what was a wonderful week in so many ways.

### **Recent School Trips**

This year has seen a resumption of school trips and wider extra-curricular opportunities for pupils. We saw Year 9 pupils take part in a STEM Global Underwater Challenge competition in Newcastle, Geography students across the school taking part in fieldwork activities, and Mr Rudd and the PE staff led a successful football tour down in London for 45 boys during the spring break. Mrs Moody has run a number of very successful Primary School Sports Festivals, Mrs Carroll has run several theatre trips, the Duke of Edinburgh Award's scheme has resumed in full, in-school and off-site Maths Challenges have taken place, we had the wonderful Art Exhibition in the Art Block attended by many pupils and parents, and the sixth-form pastoral team are about to take Year 12 to the University of Cumbria. Once again, I should like to take this opportunity to thank all those wonderful staff involved.

Thank you for your continued support and have an excellent summer holiday when it comes.

Kind regards,

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

Mr DS Northwood

Headmaster