

Prospective Year 7 Evening – for Admission in 2020

Good evening and welcome to Northampton School for Boys. My name is Richard Bernard and I am Headmaster of the school. Joining me on Stage are the Chair of Governors Mr Peter Bason and Senior Deputy Headmaster in charge of admissions Matthew Edwards. I am also joined by the Headboy and Head Girl – Dan Wood and Naia Elliott-Spence.

I hope you enjoyed the music provided by the student ensemble ‘The Cripps Collective’ who are excellent examples of the talent that we have in the school.

Tonight we will describe the ethos of NSB and the expectations that we have of our boys to help you decide whether NSB is the right school for your son. We will also explain the admissions procedures for **NSB**. The slides and text of my speech will be available on the school website to ensure everyone receives the same information. On your way in you were given a booklet that again contains essential information when making your application.

Before you hear a lot more from me I will handover to Mr Bason, for the Chair of Governors’ address.

- Peter Bason Address

The Ethos of NSB

The school was founded in 1541 by Thomas Chipsey and in 1911 moved to its present location. The magnificent front on the Billing Road, the immaculate grounds create an ambience of tradition – of scholarship and of learning. Our distinguished history is all around us – and displayed most prominently in the 1911 Hall which you will see next week. The boys quickly assimilate and

appreciate our traditional values. They learn of our successful former students who have gone on to ‘make a difference’ in the world. This gives them the confidence to know that they too can go on to great success.

The school has a proud recent heritage too. We are recognised as Outstanding in all categories by Ofsted, we were also identified in a national speech in 2019 by the Schools’ Standards Minister Nick Gibb MP as a secondary school with an outstanding ethos and approach to education that all comprehensive schools should look to emulate. As a nationally designated Teaching School we not only provide education for children, but we also organise the training of new teachers, and we arrange professional training for schools where needed. We were honoured in 2017 to be awarded the hugely prestigious title of ‘Educational Establishment of the Year’ at a national Education Awards ceremony after being nominated by various teaching unions as the stand out number one school out of the 28,000 or so schools in England. We were also awarded the accolade of Northamptonshire overall School of the Year award for 2019.

In terms of our future plans, due to the chronic shortage of school places in Northampton and because of our outstanding success and popularity, NSB Trust are delighted that our application to set up a new secondary free school in Northampton has been accepted by the Department for Education and has now entered the Pre-Opening phase. Our new school – Northampton School -will have a comprehensive and mixed gender cohort and will bring the highly successful ethos and culture of NSB to another 1100 students in the town. We await confirmation from the DfE for an agreed opening date and site.

NSB has possibly the finest state school facilities in the country, which you will view next week. In the last few years alone we have had the privilege of

opening a multi-million pound Human Performance Centre consisting of a 25 metre swimming pool, a fitness suite and a huge dance studio as well as a completely refreshed and updated Music facility in the summer of 2018 and a rejuvenated Theatre this year as well.

But as you will hear, outstanding student achievement comes from outstanding student work ethic; the facilities merely make excellence easier to attain.

You will find a series of videos on our website which are essential viewing for anyone thinking of applying for a place at the school. Here is one example – Culture and Ethos.

Boys at NSB follow an academic curriculum of real breadth and depth. In Year 7 all boys study English, Maths, Science, DT, Computer Science, French or Spanish or German, History, Geography, RE, PE, Art, Music, Dance and Drama. At GCSE level boys also study a full academic curriculum. As a result of this academic focus far more students at NSB achieve the government acclaimed EBacc (English, Maths, History or Geography, Science, MFL at Grade 5+) qualification than the national average. Students are taught in one of three ability groups throughout Yrs 7-11 although there is flexibility of movement between sets according to student performance. Lessons are 45 minutes long with the occasional double lesson for practical based subjects – this length of lesson has proved to be optimal for maximising boys' achievement.

Our academic record is outstanding – our boys achieve far in excess of national expectations across the curriculum for both attainment and progress levels in comparison to all students – that's boys and girls, and in comparison to boys only.

We are currently the top ranked secondary school in Northamptonshire (76 secondary schools) for boys' achievement in all four of the government's national key performance indicators for academic achievement - we have the highest Progress 8 score measuring progress from Y6 to Y11, at +0.66 - benchmarked by the Department for Education at the highest grading of Well Above Average, the highest Grade average per GCSE entry known as the Attainment 8 grade, the highest percentage of students gaining English and Maths at grade 5 and above and the highest grade average for EBacc subjects.

In summary, for every GCSE exam that NSB boys sit they are achieving, on average well over three quarters of a grade higher than boys of the same ability across England. NSB is well within the top 1.5% of all schools in England for boys' progress. All three prior ability groups of boys - low, middle and high prior ability perform year in year out with excellence in comparison to national expectations. Subjects across the curriculum perform outstandingly well with exceptional Maths, English, Science and Humanities results in 2019 all being anticipated to be within the top two percent of all schools in the country for boys' progress and attainment. In fact, in Maths almost half of the whole cohort achieved a Grade 7, 8 or 9 (old A/A*).

In the Sixth Form we now have over 500 students and we offer 26 academic A Levels and we are very proud of our 0% NEET figure at the end of Yr 13 i.e. every student goes on to education, employment or training . Six students in 2018 /19 gained a place at Oxford or Cambridge and attainment is expected to be above the national average at A Level overall and for the vast majority of KS5 subjects when national data is released later in the year.

Probably our standout feature of the school is the extra-curricular opportunities on offer, currently standing at over 200 clubs / activities every week over lunchtimes or after school. There is really something for everyone from the normal sport, music, dance and drama to chess, debating, Duke of Edinburgh and Dr Who Club. We believe that boys achieve academically when they are busy and involved in the life of the school. We also passionately believe that all boys should be able to realise their potential in whatever activity they are interested in.

We have secured incredible national and international success at Sport and in Music, Dance, Drama and Art. Every year we compete in the national final stages of sport competitions – for example in the last three years, we have won the U18 National Schools Rugby Vase Championship (a competition for both state and private schools) which was held at Twickenham, the national football U15 age group championship, the U16 Basketball national Championship and the Year 7 national indoor rowing championships. In 2018/19 we reached national finals in football, rugby, basketball, cross country, water polo, golf and athletics. The sporting year was crowned when we were named in the top two ranked schools, for the sixth time in 6 years in Great Britain for competitive sport by a leading national sports publication. We have a fantastic fixture list for all sports with matches played throughout the week including rugby fixtures on a Saturday with the likes of Wellington College, Warwick School and Whitgift School on the fixture card this year. We also employ an army of high calibre sports coaches, many of whom are former professionals, to support our exceptional PE staff. We are very proud of the fact that two of our former students are in the current full England senior squads for rugby and cricket – Courtney Lawes and David Willey. In terms of our present students thirteen boys / girls were picked for their country to play international sport last year. Five of the current Northampton Saints First Team are former NSB students and

two other boys are playing for Northampton Town FC. Former student Glenn Middleton also stole the headlines last year for his performances at Rangers under Steven Gerrard. One of our current Year 13 students captains the Northamptonshire County Cricket U18 side

In regard to the Expressive Arts our U14 Dance Team recently won the World Street Dance championship for their age group, our senior dancers were invited as one of only two schools to perform at the Royal Albert Hall in front of His Royal Highness Prince Charles last September and we were the East Midlands representatives at the National U Dance finals in 2018 for the second year running after winning through the local, county and regional rounds. Our Big Band have performed in the School Proms, also at the Royal Albert Hall and at the Primary Proms in the Symphony Hall– both hugely prestigious invitation only events. Many boys have subsidised individual music tuition and many also go on to perform in music and drama on the public stage – in this Theatre and in the local community. Eleven of our outgoing Y13 music students will be starting at leading music conservatoires across England and Wales next month. Several Y13 leavers will also be attending prestigious Fine Art / Photography schools. Last year our musical ‘The Sound of Music’ pulled in capacity audiences for three consecutive nights and I am also delighted to say that two of our students last year performed in leading shows on the West End when they weren’t at school studying! There are also countless opportunities for boys to take part in sporting and performing arts opportunities at a recreational level – largely through the framework of our immensely popular House System.

I hope you enjoy some of the video highlights of what I have just described.

Learning will only occur in a well disciplined environment. As such, we expect behaviour in classrooms to be exemplary, enabling students of all abilities to

learn. Behaviour around the school is excellent – outstanding conduct is the norm and the expectation. British values of respect, tolerance and diversity are engrained.

We challenge and support our boys who find learning difficult, and we challenge our most able students through our Gifted and Talented programme. All our students are of equal value, whatever their background, talents and abilities and as I said earlier all of our boys regardless of whether they come in at low, mid or high prior ability perform at an outstanding level on a rigorous academic GCSE curriculum.

We expect students to show a generosity of spirit through our Charity Week and through our links with a disadvantaged community in Malawi and a Township School in South Africa. On average 20 sixth form students each year have spent over 3 weeks of their summer holiday working and providing support in poverty stricken communities across the world. We believe our students should take a broad view of the world, and their responsibility in it and for it.

We want to encourage youngsters to become our future leaders and we have an extensive residential education and Duke of Edinburgh programme, with over 200 students currently going for bronze, silver or gold, to help support this. We have a robust and active student House leadership team which play a strategic role in the development of the school.

As Ofsted said: “The outstanding curriculum and opportunities outside of lessons enables students to achieve highly and to develop the personal skills they will need in the next stage of their lives”.

All these opportunities are only possible because of an exceptional staff – staff who in Ofsted’s words ‘have excellent knowledge of their subjects and who forge excellent working relationships with the students of whom they have the highest expectations’.

We believe that engaging parents in their sons’ learning is crucial. We will expect you to help maximise attendance and to ensure your son is punctual. We will provide you with all of the information that you need to help support your son in achieving his potential both academically and outside of the classroom. We will not grant Term - time off for holidays. We will expect you to support our policies, and to work with us in developing your son as he grows from a child to a skilled and responsible young man.

If you believe your son is ready to commit to rising to the challenges that will face him, and he has the determination to succeed – then he will excel at Northampton School for Boys. It is clearly a hugely important decision – matching your own son to the ethos of a school. It is a possibility that NSB is not the school for him!

This is my sixth year as Headmaster of the School. I have worked at four secondary schools over 25 years including seven years as Vice and Acting Principal at another similarly outstanding school in Northamptonshire. I have also inspected many schools for Ofsted. I can honestly say to you that this school provides the highest standard of educational provision and opportunities that I have seen and if your son approaches the school with the right attitude he will flourish.

But you don’t have to take my word for it!

The Head Boy and Head Girl.

- Dan Wood and Naia Elliott Spence speech
- MED's speech

I hope you now have a good idea what NSB stands for, and what life will be like for a Year 7 boy at the school. But a word for the boys in the Theatre!

Please do not be complacent. We provide the opportunities – but you have to seize them. Do not imagine you will be successful just by being here. You need to make it happen. You will be successful – whichever school you go to – if you try your very best.

NSB students aim high. You won't all achieve straight 8/9 grades, but students leave here as confident, responsible, motivated and independent young people ready to make their mark in society. They are ready for the challenges that lie beyond school. We hope to see you here in September so that you can maximise your potential both in and out of the classroom. There really is something for everyone in this school.

One final word about admissions. I want to reiterate that if you wish for your son to attend Northampton School for Boys as your number one choice then you must put it down as first choice. The equal preference system correctly rules out any notion of application tactics so simply put down the three schools that you want to apply for in your true preference order. Schools are not made aware of which preference number that you put the school down for. Your son will be assessed against the admissions criteria equally for each of the three schools that you indicate and if he gets in to more than one of them then the Local Authority will give your son a place in the one that you have put down as the highest

preference. There are no games to play, regardless of any rumours that you may hear, the system is designed to be absolutely fair to parents.

I would also like to re - emphasise that the Common ability test is not a pass or fail test. Boys please don't worry about it just simply do your best – your score will place you in one of five ability bands and we take an equal number of boys from each band. We are an inclusive school and we welcome applications from students of all academic abilities.

I look forward to seeing you all next week at our Open Evening on Thursday. If you have any questions at this stage we will be outside the Theatre when you leave.

Thank you very much for coming - have a safe journey home.