

6th February 2015

Dear Parents & Carers,

It's been a long, cold winter...

As I sit here writing this newsletter, it is a bright and crisp winter's day outside. Whereas the autumn term was unusually mild, since we have returned in January we have had a long period of biting cold weather. All-too-often in schools this can lead to deterioration in student behaviour – being cooped up inside etc – but this term has probably been the smoothest so far.

Last term I explained how we were going to reaffirm our expectations regarding punctuality, uniform & after-school detentions. I'd like to thank everyone for their support with this:

- punctuality is massively improved, with morning lateness down by 75%;
- standards of uniform & presentation are the best yet; and
- the effectiveness of keeping students back after school is even greater.

These things together are helping us have an even smoother start to the school day & ensure that we can focus even more tightly on the tiny minority of students & families who cause concern through their actions or attitude.

Impending further improvements to the school

A big thank you to Mrs Edge, our Business Manager, for helping the new caterers in the school restaurant for getting off to such a smooth start. We have been delighted with how things have gone so far – the quality and range of food is better, prices are reasonable, and we have seen a large increase in the uptake by students.

As always when things change, we've had a few hurdles to overcome – for instance it has taken longer to get everyone through the restaurant & served in time. However, things have speeded up significantly in the last few weeks & I am pleased at how patient students have been as things have settled down.

I am pleased to be able to confirm that Breakfast Club will start from after half term. There will be a range of breakfast items available between 0745 and 0815 every day – a menu will be available on the website shortly.

In other improvement news, we have now arranged to replace all the old and worn-out carpets across the school between now and the summer term. We have been really careful with the school finances since we opened, and this means we have saved up money to do this to a really high quality.

Refurbishing the main staircase in the school (the "up" staircase) is a massive job, and cannot be done when all of our students are in school. In order to make sure that it can be done over the Easter break, we have taken the decision to move a staff training day from the summer term to the end of this one. As a result, **school will be closed for Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 on Friday March 27th** – given the closeness to GCSE exams, **we will be running sessions for Year 11 on that day!**

We have changed uniform suppliers!

Given feedback from BFS families we are now in the process of switching uniform suppliers. The key things you need to know for now are as follows:

- our old supplier **Clive Mark will no longer be able to take any orders for BFS uniform**
- we have bought all the existing stock & **for now it can now only be purchased from school**
- **from next month Josens will be our supplier** – so you will be able to buy uniform from their shop in Bedford or their website; they don't have any stock yet – we will let you know as soon as it comes in.

There is also a new & improved PE kit being introduced, so as you buy new pieces for your child you will see this rolling out. All-in-all these changes will mean a definite improvement on things to date – and we would like to thank you all for your patience during this transitional period.

Year 9 – GCSE options requests

I have had a few families ask me recently when their child will be able to make their GCSE options requests. Fear not – this is all in hand, and a letter outlining the timeline for the whole process will be coming home next week. **A date for your diary now though: Options Evening will be 5th March.**

Experience has taught us that later in the spring term is the best time to consider GCSEs as it give students enough time from September to consider everything (and in particular try out the various Design Technology options before making choices).

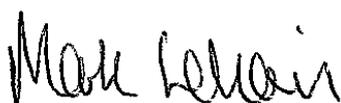
A few messages from the School Office

- **Lost property** – the pile is now so large it is developing its own gravitational field and ecosystem. We could probably run the school purely on the funds raised if we sold it all on eBay, so please send your child towards students reception if they have lost anything before we dispose of it...
- **Medicines** - if a student needs to have medication in school this should be accompanied by a letter detailing the dosage and frequency. Please note: it is the responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure that medication in school is in date and replenished; we cannot be held responsible for this.
- **Contact details** – our regular reminder that if you have moved or changed your phone number etc then we really need to know!

As I reflect on how 2015 has gone so far, many, many great things jump out at me. We have had two very successful visits from external experts to look in detail at how we are getting on as a school - one was a former senior HMI for Ofsted – and the feedback from both of these has been extremely positive.

As we face the run in to our first set of GCSEs (we are the first brand new free school to have GCSE results) we feel well placed to get results significantly better than our students might otherwise have got elsewhere. We have a steady stream of students joining us in year 7 (places still available!) and some exciting news to share with everyone in the near future too.

And all of this is only possible with the input of our BFS families – as ever, many thanks for the feedback & support. Have a great weekend!



Mark Lehain.

Key dates

13th February	School closes for Half Term holiday, 3.15pm
16th – 20th February	Half term NB some Yr 11 revision sessions on this week
23rd February	Student return to school, 8.25am start, week ONE on timetable
w/c 2nd March	Year 11 mock exams week
5th March	Year 9 – Options Evening – timings to be confirmed
12th March	Year 9 Progress Evening – school finishes at 3.30pm
19th March	Year 11 Progress Evening – school finishes at 3.30pm
26th March	Year 10 Progress Evening – school finishes at 3.30pm
27th March	Year 11s in schools for GCSE preparation School closed for Years 7, 8, 9 and 10
30th March – 10th April	Easter Holidays "Easter School" sessions for Year 11 and other students