

26th March 2015

Dear Parents & Carers,

Short but sweet

It really has been a short and intense term – and hard work for both students and staff. We have made tremendous progress on a whole range of fronts – not just academically, but in terms of strengthening the curriculum, resources and facilities of the school, and improving the opportunities & experiences available to our students.

If I take just a selection of things from the term I can create a list like so:

- additional English & maths lessons for all students – with a corresponding improvement in the progress and attainment see already
- more support with students' reading, across the board
- students from Years 9, 10 and 11 taking part in the National Theatre "Connections" competition
- Year 9s getting involved with a space weekend with an astronaut at Cranfield University
- over 40 students in Year 7 taking part in the BFS Strictly Come Dancing competition
- 90 students seeing "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time" at the theatre
- World Book Day
- our achievement as a school of the "Girls Active" sports award
- refurbishment & refreshment of more parts of the school
- two of our Combined Cadet Force students attending a weekend at Wellbeck College
- a new, improved food offer in the school restaurant (including a breakfast service)
- more sports fixtures than ever before (this half term 28 fixtures in 24 days!) – including our first wins in football AND a Year 9 team winning a regional indoor rowing competition.

If your child or their teachers look a bit tired at the moment, it's probably at least in part because of these sorts of things.

As I watched the semi-final of the Strictly Come Dancing yesterday, in the "cage" out the back, 16 pairs of students with numbers pinned on their backs, cha-cha-chaing their little hearts out with around 100 other students looking on, I had one of those moments where I thought to myself "**only at Bedford Free School...**"

However, you know how we are at BFS & we're not standing still, and some of the further improvements lined up for Easter and beyond include:

- instrumental music lessons for all Year 7s
- refurbishment of the final areas that still have old carpets
- Maths, English and Science departments being externally reviewed as we gear up for inspection next year
- all the windows in school being revamped & the cloudy anti-glare film on them being removed (we'll be able to see outside again!)
- Catch Up Club rolled out to Year 9s
- Events to mark the 70th anniversary of VE Day, the 200th anniversary of the Waterloo (the battle and not the Abba song), and the 800 anniversary of Magna Carta
- the commencement of the sports hall/onsite facilities building project.

On a personal level I am particularly excited about the Music for All scheme, and being able to introduce all our students over to time to the joys of playing an instrument. That we'll also have a hall for them to do performances in is all the sweeter!

The Hope Foundation Summer Ball – 20th June

Another reminder that BFS supports an orphanage in South Africa called "House of Hope" and that we do this through the Hope Foundation, a charity originally set up a few years ago by some local people – including our very own Miss Turney.

A summer fundraising ball is planned for the 20th June & we'd love to see as many people linked to BFS there as possible! Details can be found on the school website here:

<http://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/blog/post.php?s=2015-02-10-hope-foundation-summer-ball>

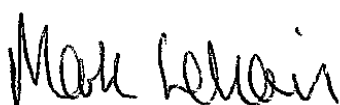
Next term...

All-in-all, the summer is going to be a long and busy term for every involved with BFS. We have our Year 11s to get through their GCSEs and on into sixth forms or training, Year 10s to improve attainment, sit End of Year exams & do Work Experience, Year 9s sorted for GCSE options, Year 7s and 8s to continue gaining the knowledge needed to prepare for GCSEs, and of course continue to recruit new students AND plan for a smooth transition for those already with places for September.

If I had to ask one thing of BFS families it would be this: please focus on ensuring your child is in school, and on time, every single day. It is particularly apparent that students who do this do better in any way you care to measure it. **The most important thing you can do as a parent or carer is to get them in and let us get on with our work with them.** Some of our students come here having been allowed to get into bad attendance habits. Most of these adjust & live up to our high expectations – but unfortunately some have failed to do so, and next term I will be personally checking up on these. Their future achievement depends on it, and I will do whatever it takes to ensure their families support them and us in doing so. We have so much to offer students here – and waiting lists in most year groups – and we expect students to attend & make the most of the opportunities we provide.

Have a smashing Easter break.

All the very best,



Mark Lehain.

Key dates

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
13th April	Start of summer term – 8.25am NB week TWO on the timetable
23rd April	Year 8 Progress Evening – school finishes at 3.30pm
25th April	Saturday Taster Sessions for prospective students – 9.30am – 12.30pm
22nd May	School finishes for half term
25th – 29th May	Half term holiday - Year 11 Revision sessions
1st June	Students back in school, 8.25am, week TWO on timetable
15th – 19th June	Year 10 Exam Week
22nd – 26th June	Year 10 Work Experience week Exam weeks for Years 7, 8 and 9
17th July	Last day of term