

23<sup>rd</sup> November 2015

Dear Parents & Carers,

### **Good news all around...**

A shorter newsletter from me today, with a few updates and reminders of key upcoming events. **We have just had a week of mock GCSEs with our Year 11s, and have been delighted with the way they conducted themselves** – they are a smashing set of students, with an overwhelmingly constructive approach to their studies. Whilst we haven't yet marked and moderate all the exams, initial impressions are positive – and with only six months to go before the real things, as a school we are feeling increasingly confident of a super set of outcomes for them.

Obviously though I couldn't write this today without starting off with...

### **Planning permission granted for our rooftop extension**

Many of you will have seen this news on social media or in the press already but, just in case you hadn't, I thought I should confirm that **we have now received planning approval for the extension on our roof.**

This is fantastic news for everyone concerned. It hasn't been easy getting to this stage – indeed, councillors on the committee initially turned our application down before changing their mind a few minutes later! However, with this out of the way we are now getting on with planning how to actually deliver the facilities with the minimum of disruption to students and staff. Contractors have already been in to school to finalise the site logistics, with the works commencing in the New Year, and we'll keep you posted on developments as they proceed.

### **Progress Evenings – Year 8 & Year 11**

A particular remind of the Progress Evenings due in the next couple of weeks:

**Year 8 – 3<sup>rd</sup> December**

**Year 11 – 10<sup>th</sup> December**

Note that as usual, school will finish slightly earlier on these days, at 3.30pm, to allow staff time to prepare. Homework Club will run as usual.

Your child should start making appointments with key staff this week. If they tell you that they haven't managed to do so, or the teacher was already fully booked, let us know – it's not normally the case...

**Importantly, for Year 11s, we will issue their mock exam results on the night!** Also, that **same evening is our "Next Steps" events**, where ALL the local 6<sup>th</sup> forms will be present to advise students & their families about the courses and opportunities to them post-GCSEs. We'll also have the National Citizen's Service and apprenticeship advisors available on the night too. Last year's was brilliant – and we have brought it forward this year in order that students can be ahead of the game with their planning.

### **More students than ever at BFS...**

I mentioned last time that I have done more tours for prospective students than ever before, and that we will most likely be oversubscribed for Year 7 next year, which will be a first. With additional students joining us this week, we will have more on roll than at any point since we opened in 2012 – and more are due to come between now and January.

As I keep saying, **please encourage any friends who are still to make up their mind to visit us sooner rather than later.** (We now have literally only a couple of spaces left in Years 9 and 10.) Whilst it is a professional challenge to induct and absorb so many new students during a term, it is testament to the strength of our culture and the commitment of our staff that we have been able to do this with minimal hiccups.

## **Thank you for the feedback - more welcome!**

Last time I asked families to complete the Ofsted "Parent View" online survey, and I'm grateful to those who did so. If you haven't yet done the survey this school year, please take a few minutes out to register and complete it here: <https://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk/login?destination=give-your-views>

## **Let's all keep plugging away...**

So much of what makes a child's education successful is a result of the little things being done consistently well: **parents getting their child into school every day, students getting to lessons prepared and on time, teachers having organised and orderly lessons...** Whilst we are far from perfect as a school (how often do I say that to parents?!), I think we are pleased with the growing consistency we see around the place. The things we change to improve things DO work.

**Take attendance – until this year the school's Achilles heel**, and a factor holding back too many of our students. Although intended as supportive, Catch Up Club was not popular when introduced, but today **attendance is higher than it has ever been**, by a huge margin (even with a small number of irresponsible parents taking children out of school for term time holidays.)

We are now turning our attention to two particularly important groups of students: the many **new ones who have joined us during the term**, to ensure that they can adjust to our high expectations of attendance, attitude and attainment, and **the small number still failing to behave as we all want even though they have been with us for some time** (i.e. those not passing "the Sophie test"). By ensuring these students are successful in the BFS way, everyone else can enjoy the school even more, and do even better as a result.

All the best,

Mark Lehain.

## **Key dates for this term**

1 <sup>st</sup> December	GCSE Awards Evening – at Bedford School ( <b>note</b> – not here at BFS)
3 <sup>rd</sup> December	Year 8 Progress Evening – 5.30pm – 8.30pm <b>School finishes at 3.30pm</b>
10 <sup>th</sup> December	Year 11 Progress Evening and 'Next steps event' – 5.30pm – 8.30pm <b>School finishes at 3.30pm</b>
15 <sup>th</sup> December	Christmas Dinner at school – <b>NOTE CHANGE OF DATE</b>
15 <sup>th</sup> December	Christmas Showcase – The Place Theatre, 6pm & 7.30pm
16 <sup>th</sup> December	Year 7 Harry Potter trip
17 <sup>th</sup> December	Christmas Assembly - St. Paul's Church, all welcome to attend - 2pm
18 <sup>th</sup> December	End of term – <b>school finishes at 1.30pm (note, change of time)</b>
5 <sup>th</sup> January	Start of Spring Term – 8.25am as usual
14 <sup>th</sup> January	Year 10 Progress Evening – 5.30pm – 8.30pm <b>School finishes at 3.30pm</b>