

10th June 2016

Dear Parents & Carers,

The long run in...

It's a brief newsletter from me today as I've only a few things to update people on. We have had a very smooth return from the half term break, getting straight back into the swing of things. There is a lot of preparation going on for our end-of-year exams for Years 7 to 10, and we have been so very impressed with the exceptionally mature way that our Year 11 students have been conducting themselves during their GCSE exams. Anyway, on with the notices...

Friends of BFS Quiz Night – rescheduled for July 15th

Another reminder that our rescheduled Friends of BFS Quiz Night will be on Friday July 15th – and we'll get new entry forms etc out sometime next week.

The "RELAY" scheme

Given the large number of students that have joined BFS during the course of this year, I thought I should mention again our involvement in the RELAY scheme, in partnership with Bedford Police & Bedford Borough Council.

The RELAY Scheme is a service whereby the School is informed of any incidents of domestic abuse reported to Bedfordshire Police that occur at an address where BFS students live. This allows us to properly look after our students when they are in school, by putting in place the appropriate support for them.

The scheme is now running in most schools in the Borough. At BFS it is coordinated by Mrs Herron and our Pastoral Co-ordinators, and is facilitated by the Early Help Service at Bedford Borough Children's Services. If you would like more information about the Scheme or support that can be offered around Domestic Abuse please speak with Mrs Herron."

Building works

There is good news and not-so-good news on this front. **Unfortunately it looks as though it will be a few more weeks before the works start again, which means that we're now most likely looking at a Christmas finish to the project.** The silver lining to this cloud is that there will now be minimal disruption during term time, as the noisy or tricky jobs will almost entirely fall within the summer and October half term holidays. If there is any more news on this, I'll let everyone know.

Sport at BFS – some "Friday Facts"

I thought I'd share a few interesting statistics that Mr Cox has given me this week, about sport at BFS and the level of participation of our students:

- **70% of our students have represented the school in at least one sport this year!**
- 21% of our students have had the opportunity to lead at lower or primary school events!
- we have competed in 16 different recognised sports (and more that are not!) across all 5 year groups with both boys and girls!

Not bad for a school in a town centre without its own playing fields, don't you think?! And all of this is only possible because of the dedication of BFS students and staff! They really do #gotheextramile.

We are now an approved "academy sponsor"...

I mentioned in the last few newsletters that we have been exploring ways that the School can work more closely with other schools, and that as part of this process we had applied to the Department for Education to become an official "academy sponsor".

We were informed this week that our application had been successful – further proof of the confidence that people have in us, as **we are one of only a few schools in the region with this designation.** Whilst it doesn't change anything immediately, it does mean that we are in the position to improve things for our students and staff over time, by formally linking up with other schools if we decide that it is something that we want to do.

Looking ahead to September

It's the time of year where Heads can sit down and finally figure out exactly what they have got to look forward to in the next academic year. As I write this today the situation is as follows:

- **we are fully staffed with subject specialists for every part of our curriculum;**
- we even have a slight surplus of teachers in subjects that are normally hard to recruit to;
- we are likely to start the year oversubscribed in every single year group except Year 8 (current Year 7s) – **with nearly 120 students in the new Year 7**, so around 510 students in total!

In the next week or so, **we will be informing our Year 9 students which GCSE option subjects we have allocated to them** – and once again, we have managed to organise things such that nearly 90% of students will get their four top requests.

I am currently considering some tweaks to the school day, as I am keen to see what we can do to allow for:

- some daily dedicated reading & literature opportunities;
- smoother lunch breaks, in terms of accessing our restaurant & supervising students;
- more time for student reflection, feedback, and improving our culture for learning;
- ways to bring teachers together more frequently for focused training.

We are also looking at:

- ways to **streamline the setting and collecting of homework**, to make it more straightforward for students and staff (homework is a perennial challenge to get right, but I think it's worth examining again);
- how we can **make transitions between lessons quicker and more efficient** (they're already pretty good – but they could be even calmer and quicker);
- **improving the range of student leadership opportunities** (to make them even more meaningful, and create opportunities throughout the School);
- **if it is possible to bring forward the end of the formal school day slightly** (would 4pm be possible and still enable us to do all the extra things we do?)

We are still discussing ideas as a staff, and **if there is anything in particular that families think we should look at, please drop me a line through the usual channels.**

Those of you who had children here two years ago will remember we piloted prep sessions in the last part of the summer term, before we introduced them in the September – and we will trial some of the changes we have in mind this time around in a similar fashion. I'll detail these in my next newsletter – but for now, have a great weekend!

All the best,

Mark Lehain.

Key dates

w/c 20 th June	Year 10 Exam Week
27 th /28 th /29 th June	Year 7, 8 and 9 – exams in core subjects AND Development Days
w/c 27 th June	Year 10 Work Experience
6 th July	Year 6s visiting for Transfer Day
8 th July	Sports Awards Evening
14 th July	Sports Day – at Bedford International Athletic Stadium – details to follow
15 th July	Friends of BFS Quiz Night
22 nd July	End of Year Celebration Assembly – all welcome - more details to follow
25 th August	GCSE Results Day