

29th March 2017

Dear Parents & Carers,

Coming together nicely

As I have sat in my office this week I have been able to watch come down the last of the scaffolding that has covered the school building for the past year. Finally – FINALLY! – it is finished and we have a building that is even better able to support us in our efforts every day.

We took possession of the new facilities just after half term, and have been finding our way with them since. I know Miss Damon is delighted to be teaching drama in a dedicated room, instead of the canteen (fantastic though that was.) The P.E. department have made their new office feel like home already. And hosting assemblies and Progress Evenings in the hall is just so very lovely, and much easier than previously.

However, facilities are only a means to an end – that end being us helping students to become kind, hard-working and successful young people, ready to take on the world for the better. We know we don't always achieve that, and that we don't always get things right every day, but we also know that we do a pretty good job – especially when we are able to work closely with families, and they support us in this endeavour. Which nicely leads me on to...

Progress Evenings

The recent Progress Evenings for Years 9 and 11 were absolutely brilliant, in so many ways. Attendance was exceptional – with **nearly 100% of families present to support their child**. Just as important though was the serious and mature way people listened to the feedback from staff, and asked follow-up questions. For example, there were difficult conversations to be had with some of our Y11 students, but the way in which they engaged with things was heartening. Where Y9 students and their families had GCSE options to consider, the range and depth of questions asked to Mr Donald and staff showed us how sensible these things were being considered too.

So let me take the opportunity here to thank all of our families for the ongoing support they give their children, and the school, every day. Raising teenagers isn't easy, and schools aren't always the easiest of organisations to navigate, but those evenings really brought home how seriously everyone takes their part in this.

Year 9 Option Requests

A quick reminder here that **we need ALL of the GCSE Option Request forms back by TOMORROW**. Mr Donald will be processing these and making draft subject allocations to students over Easter, so that we can start assessing the feasibility of what people have requested in the summer term.

Should your child have any questions still, they should talk to Mr Donald ASAP, and he will be able to guide them to a solution.

Parent parking

Another request on this issue: please, please, **PLEASE do not park in Bedford College when dropping off or picking up your child from school**. We have been told about a small number of BFS families causing congestion there by doing this, and it potentially damages our relationship with one of our closest neighbours.

Please remember that our agreed and official drop off point is the Melbourne Street carpark. Please also be thoughtful when using Melbourne Street – we have had some reports of people parking up in the street and blocking other cars from accessing the car park or, worse, people blocking driveways.

Student successes

Where we are made aware of student successes outside of school, we like to share them with the wider BFS family, and it's been lovely to hear of some outstanding ones in recent weeks.

It with great pleasure then that I can share that **Emma Abbey**, in our Year 7, was recently selected by Bedford & County AC to run in the English National Cross Country event last month. She ran a 3k race, and did incredibly well –we are all really chuffed for her!

We also experienced massive success in the recent Bedfordshire Festival of Music, Speech and Drama. While we have previously had individuals take part in this, it was the first time we had made entries as a school – and **we did incredibly well, winning 3 out of the 5 categories entered.** All the students who took part did incredibly well, and we have photos and details on our Facebook page, which are well worth checking out.

Special mention should be made of **Athena Gallagher**, who not only won her category but who was then invited to take part in the Gala Concert at the climax of the festival – and as a result of this won the Woodfine Lousada Challenger Cup as well!

Well done to everyone who took part, and a massive 'thank you' to **Miss Goodship and Miss Damon** for preparing and supporting everyone.

Easter Holidays – Year 11 support sessions

We are all looking forward to the Easter break at the end of this week – but for our Year 11s, it will be a time of self-study and revision throughout!

They have already been briefed on what they should be doing, and we know most are doing this; to assist them **we will run our usual Support Sessions throughout the break.** The schedule for these is at the end of this newsletter, and we're looking forward to welcoming them all to these. Eleven weeks and then it is all over and they can enjoy an extremely long summer break...

Summer School Uniform

Mrs Herron would like me to let you know that after Easter - and for the Summer Term only – we will move to "summer uniform". The only change is that wearing a school jumper becomes optional.

We should stress that students will need to keep an eye on the weather, as only school jumpers will be allowed should there be cold patches. Our smart school blazer should still be worn over beautifully tucked in shirts! And of course, come September we will expect all our students to be wearing jumpers once again as part of full uniform.

Exciting times ahead

The term was meant to be a quieter one for us, but it seems to have been as busy as ever. On the sporting front, **Mr Cox and the team have overseen 53 fixtures in 30 days** – covering rugby, football, cricket and American football too! Our Year 8 boys were unbeaten in the football league, and the Year 9/10 girls cricket reached the county finals (which is taking place as I write this!)

As well as the festival successes detailed above, rehearsals are under way for our next school performance: **"Free!, which will take place at the Trinity Arts theatre on the 26th April.**

On March 1st we made a record number of offers for students to join us this September – **we received 200 applications in total, for the 100 places.** As a result of this, and the careful management of our resources by **Mrs Edge** and the team, where you may hear about other schools worrying about finances, we are in an incredibly comfortable position.

This is enabling us to plan ahead for next year, and get out early to recruit an exceptional group of teachers for the next academic year. Where I hear elsewhere of schools struggling to find people to fill jobs, **we have been inundated with good quality people applying this term – we have even turned down people that we would happily have employed if we'd had another vacancy for them**, such was the depth and strength of some fields. Candidates are telling us that they're attracted by the values and vision of the school – and the reputation of our students for being well-behaved, polite, and hard working.

It all means that as we finish off our current Year 11s and send them into their GCSEs, we can already consider how we'll be working with the rest of our students next year. Given our financial strength we may be able to afford additional staff in key subjects, and ensure we have the right mix of skills, experience and energy to shape things as we want them to be.

Behind the scenes **we have continued working with Elstow School to create our multi-academy trust "Advantage Schools"**. Families should notice exactly no change at all when this officially kicks in next week – and we have already been able to identify with our colleagues at Elstow ways in which we can work more closely over time, to the benefit of staff, students and their families.

Related to this, we are still awaiting news of our application to open a new school in St Neots. I am expecting something very soon though – and **as soon as we hear anything, I will of course let people know.**

I hope you all manage to find some time for rest and family and friends this Easter break. See you all again next term!

Mark Lehain.

Key dates for 2016-2017

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| 31 st March | Last day of spring term |
| w/c 3 rd & 10 th April | Easter Holidays **Y11 GCSE revision sessions will run during this time** |
| 18 th April | Start of summer term – usual time, lineup at 0825 |
| 26 th April | School production - "Free!" – 7pm at Trinity Arts Centre, details to follow |
| 27 th April | Year 10 – Progress Evening (students leave 3.20pm, appointments from 5.30pm) |
| 1 st May | Bank Holiday Monday – school closed |
| 4 th May | Year 8 – Progress Evening (students leave 3.20pm, appointments from 5.30pm) |
| 11 th May | "Official Opening" of our extension – details to follow |
| 29 th May – 2 nd June | Half term holiday (Venice trip also away during this week) |
| w/c 19 th June | Year 10 – End of Year exam week |
| w/c 26 th June | Year 7, 8 and 9 core subject exam week & Development Days Year 10 – Work Experience week |
| 13 th July | BFS Sports Day (Bedford Athletics Stadium) |
| 21 st July | End of summer term |

Year 11 Easter Revision Schedule 2017

| Monday 3rd | Tuesday 4th | Wednesday 5th | Thursday 6th | Friday 7th |
|-------------------------------|--|--|---|--------------------------------|
| Science 9am – 3pm | Drama 10am – 3.30pm Resistant Materials 9am-3.30pm | Art 9.30am-3.30pm Resistant Materials 9am-3.30pm | History 10am-3.30pm Geography 10am- 3.30pm Art (by arrangement with Miss Glasspool) | Art 9.30am-3.30pm |
| Monday 10th | Tuesday 11th | Wednesday 12th | Thursday 13th | Friday 14th |
| Maths 9.30am-1pm | Drama 10am – 3.30pm | Computing 10am- 3.30pm | Computing 10am- 3.30pm | GOOD FRIDAY – SCHOOL CLOSED |

Students should note:

- Please arrive to all sessions on time with all the equipment and resources you will need. You will need to leave the school site at lunchtime and please be aware that the canteen will not be open.
- Teachers are giving up their holiday to run these sessions so you need to be prepared to attend the entire session.
- You do not need to be in school uniform.