

28<sup>th</sup> April 2017

Dear Parents & Carers,

### **To everything there is a season...**

So the third and final term of the year is well and truly underway, our Year 11s are into the final stages of GCSE preparation, and things have settled back into the to-and-fro of daily school life once more after a slightly longer-than-usual Easter break.

I do so relish the summer term at BFS. There is lots to savour: sports fixtures & Sports Day; sunny lunchtimes; Work Experience week for Year 10s & Development Days for Years 7, 8 and 9; concerts & our Celebration Assembly. The list goes on.

There is so much to do, and so much to enjoy along the way. Let's work together – staff, students, families – to make the most of this important and long term.

### **Free!**

Wednesday evening saw a fantastic performance by BFS students of "Free!" by David Grant. Held at the Trinity Theatre, it was a production of the highest quality, with great comic timing and some wonderful individual performances. We were delighted to see the students so well supported by friends and family in terms of there being a sizeable audience as well. As ever, many thanks to all those who helped our students along the way with this!

### **Year 8 Progress Evening next week**

It was Year 10 Progress Evening last night - a very quick reminder that next Thursday sees Year 8 Progress Evening. Please ensure your child is making appointments with their teachers – if they need a gentle "nudge" this end, just drop their form tutor a line and they'll double-check things are being done properly.

### **Year 9 Option Requests – what happens next**

We were extremely pleased to have received option request forms back from every single student before the Easter holidays started, as we had requested. (I think that might be a record for BFS!) Things will appear to go quiet from here until the second half of the term, as we design and construct the timetable for the whole school, and see how many requests can be fulfilled.

Please don't worry if your child doesn't hear anything more about GCSE Option subjects until Late June or July – when there is anything to discuss, we will let individuals know.

### **Official Opening of our extension – 5pm, 11<sup>th</sup> May**

Although we have had use of our new facilities for a while now we thought it would be nice to "officially" mark the occasion. As such, we'll have an "Official Opening" on 11<sup>th</sup> May at 5pm. In a very BFS fashion, we don't plan anything too grand or fancy – some refreshments, a chance for a catch up with friends and supporters of the school, a few words, and some performances by our students.

All are welcome to attend, but we do have an upper limit on numbers – so if you would like to come along to this, please contact Mrs Logan on [elogan@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk](mailto:elogan@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk) and she will reserve places up to our limit, on a first-come, first-served basis.

## **Change ahead**

Many of you will have spotted during the Easter holidays that we heard that our application to open another secondary school, in St Neots, had been approved to proceed. It was a relief to finally have confirmation – in the end it felt as though the decision had been dragged out forever.

In a similar vein, the first day of the Easter holidays saw the official creation of “Advantage Schools”, our multi-academy trust with Elstow School.

You’ll have often seen me write about the careful way we have managed our resources to ensure we are able to plan for the long term and weather short-term pressures or hiccups. Both of the above are moves intended to complement our work on the financial side, and enable us to work more closely with other schools over time, strengthening our position into the future.

Some of you will have recognised the title of today’s newsletter as coming from Ecclesiastes 3, 1-8. (Or perhaps being from a song by the Byrds?) It’s been running through my mind a lot recently as I’ve taken the time to consider the future of BFS, our new baby St Neots Academy, the multi-academy trust, Elstow School, and so on.

I’d always said to people that when I felt the time was right for someone else to come in and pick up the reins I’d happily step aside. For a number of really wonderful reasons – in particular the fact that BFS is about to lead on a number of exciting projects like those above - I’ve concluded that we’ve reached the point where it is time for someone to take over and see BFS and our other schools through the next stage of our development.

With that in mind, this week I informed our Trustees of my intention leave BFS, and today they have formally started the process to recruit my successor. Given where we are in the academic year, Headteacher notice periods etc., it is quite likely that I will be around until January, as I have said that I am only too happy to remain in post until whoever is appointed can start.

I only made the final decision over Easter, and it has been a funny week or so as it has sunk in. BFS is like my fifth child and has been a huge part of my life for seven years. However, it definitely feels like a great time to let someone else experience all the wonder & joy that this place holds, and to take it on to the next stage; and I’m looking forward to exploring other opportunities and trying out different things too.

Please be assured that *nothing* will change in the immediate future – I will probably remain in post for another eight months! Whenever I finally move on, BFS will be in the very best of hands. Back in the early days of the school, when we were just a campaign or had just opened, I was only too aware of how dependent everything was on me personally. While I like to think I still play a part in our success, I know that nowadays it is down to the hard work and interactions of a large number of hugely talented staff and Trustees to make a difference, and after I’ve left I know that they will carry on the work I was privileged to help kick-start. With that in mind, as and when there are any updates on this front, we will let people know.

Right, that’s all from me for now. I hope you get some rest over the Bank Holiday weekend (and some decent weather too.) See you all again next week!

**Mark Lehain.**

### **Key dates for 2016-2017**

1 <sup>st</sup> May	Bank Holiday Monday – school closed
4 <sup>th</sup> May	Year 8 – Progress Evening (students leave 3.20pm, appointments from 5.30pm)
11 <sup>th</sup> May	“Official Opening” of our extension – 5pm – places to be reserved
29 <sup>th</sup> May – 2 <sup>nd</sup> June	Half term holiday (Venice trip also away during this week)
w/c 19 <sup>th</sup> June	Year 10 – End of Year exam week
w/c 26 <sup>th</sup> June	Year 7, 8 and 9 core subject exam week & Development Days Year 10 – Work Experience week
12 <sup>th</sup> July	Summer Showcase Performance – at the Salvation Army Congress Hall
13 <sup>th</sup> July	BFS Sports Day (Bedford Athletics Stadium)
21 <sup>st</sup> July	End of summer term