

12th June 2017

Dear Parents & Carers,

Things are hotting up...

...and I don't just mean the recent weather either! Since last writing to you we have been through the main part of the GCSE exam season. Our Year 11s have all now sat nearly all their exams, and we have been so proud at the way they have conducted themselves so far. We've also been impressed at the manner in which the rest of our students have supported them in their endeavours.

While we have also said that there is so much more to schooling than results, we know that how students perform in these exams will determine the kind of doors that open up for them as they start the next stage of their education. Seeing how well they have carried themselves so far, we expect that there will be some excellent results coming this way in August!

However, exams are not just for Year 11s...

End of year exams for Years 7, 8, 9 and 10

As mentioned previously, all students in Years 7 to 10 will sit formal end of year examinations, in most subjects.

For Year 10s, their exams next week are perhaps the most important set of assessments that they will have experienced in the school career to date. They will be halfway through their GCSE courses at that stage, and experience tells us that they are the best indication yet as to how they are likely to do next summer, and what prospects await them after BFS. If your child is in Year 10 and they haven't started revising for these exams yet, then they (and you) really need to reconsider how they are approaching their studies.

For Years 7, 8 and 9, end of year exams will largely take place during lessons, but during the week commencing June 26th there will be one day dedicated to exams in English, maths and science as well as Development Days and inter-house sports Monday to Wednesday. (We're really looking forward to these!)

Official Opening of our extension

A massive "thank you" to those who joined us for the official opening of our extension. It was a wonderful occasion, and to have so many of our home-grown musical talents perform for guest was simply brilliant. **We had an unexpected guest ask to join us at the last minute** – and all the students who were present will now be able to say in their university applications in years to come that they had the chance to perform for the Secretary of State for Education while they were at BFS, which will be quite something!

It really brought home to me **how far we have come as a school community in the musical opportunities we give our students**, and the level of commitment that so many have shown to get so good, so quickly, at their instruments. We have a long way to go still, but are now starting to have other schools get in touch to find out more about how we do our "Music for All" programme, and about our work with the Salvation Army for brass lessons.

Update on our preparations for next year

There have been an awful lot of positive developments for both BFS and our wider Trust since I last wrote to families.

First of all, we have made the last couple of teaching & support staff appointments, and so we are ready to roll for September in this regard. **Mr Moore** is now working on the timetable, so all being well this important part of preparation will be done before the summer holidays.

Secondly, **Mrs Herron** and **Mrs Sexton** have been working hard on the transition arrangements for Year 6 students joining us in September, as well as general start-of-year plans. We have had some considerable discussions as a senior team as to the best way to kick things off, and **decided that we would repeat what we did this year** – get all our staff in early, but have a staggered start for students. **Please make a note of the dates listed at the end of this newsletter** – Year 7 will start first, to allow maximum time for induction, followed by Year 11s, with the rest of our students years 8, 9 and 10 starting on September 11th.

Perhaps most significantly, the final piece of the jigsaw fell into place just before half term, when **Trustees appointed my successor as Executive Principal.**

Other than advising Trustees on the recruitment process, and contributing to the information pack for candidates, I, rightly, had no involvement in choosing the successful candidate, and **I am absolutely delighted with their choice of Stuart Lock.**

Stuart is currently Head at the very successful Cottenham Village College in Cambridgeshire. I have known him on the Headteacher circuit for a few years now, and was really pleased when I heard that he had applied. **We had a really strong and interesting field of candidates** – something which is not always the case in education, especially for roles as demanding as running a small group of schools. I think **it speaks volumes about our reputation that we had experienced people prepared to leave secure roles elsewhere to join us** on our journey.

And while I am experiencing a whole range of emotions now that my departure is confirmed, I can now prepare knowing that things are going to be in good hands. I've always talked about "the Sophie test" as the ultimate way of judging things; **my eldest daughter will be arriving at BFS in September, and I am chuffed to bits that Stuart will be her Principal.**

I know how keen people will be to meet Stuart and learn more about him, so we hope to arrange some opportunities for this either before the summer holidays or early in the new academic year – watch this space.

In the meantime, do please stay in touch and pass on any feedback you may have in the usual ways. And let's hope the weather stays more strong and stable than other aspects of British life right now!

Mark Lehain.

Key dates for the remainder of the year

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
12 th July	Summer Showcase Performance – at the Salvation Army Congress Hall (details to follow)
13 th July	BFS Sports Day Bedford Athletics Stadium
21 st July	End of year Celebration Assembly – at Park Inn hotel (details to follow) End of summer term
24 th August	GCSE results day

Arrangements for the start of the next academic year

1 st & 4 th September	Staff training days
5 th & 6 th September	Year 7 ONLY in school for induction
7 th & 8 th September	Year 7 and Year 11 ONLY in school
11 th September	ALL students back in school, 8.25am