

21st June 2018

Dear Parents and Carers,

It has been some time since our last newsletter, and so there are a number of things on which to update you and a great deal to celebrate.

Year 11

It was such a pleasure to see Year 11 officially start their study last Friday. They worked so hard all year, and in the examination season conducted themselves impeccably. I know that the whole BFS family will have expected nothing less, but they are a real credit to us. We are looking forward to the leavers' dinner later this week to wish them well. It's sad to be seeing them depart, but we know they will stay in touch as our alumni over the next few years and beyond, and we will remain very proud of them. We are also saying goodbyes to a number of families where the year 11 pupil is the last child to attend BFS. I want to thank you for your support with the young people – some of whom throughout year 11 were in school studying from 8am-6pm supervised! We look forward to seeing you for results day on Thursday 23rd August.

I want to pay particular tribute to the collection of student leaders, the Deputy Head Students, and the Head Boy and Head Girl. They represented the school professionally at all times, developing year 11 as a group of leaders. I'm really confident that this group will go out and really make their positive mark on Bedford and the world!

Collection of results

A reminder that the arrangements for the collection of GCSE results is that they will be available from 10am – 12pm on the 23rd August. My colleagues and I will be present to help with college queries or advice, and we will do everything possible to ensure that the transition to colleges is successful. I hope that the students are able to have a good rest and a pleasant holiday.

Examination week and revision

We have the capacity now to put additional focus on the rest of the school, who are currently sitting their formal end-of-year examinations. They have been thoroughly prepared, and have, I hope, taken our advice. We repeatedly turn down easy but ineffective revision techniques such as highlighting or rereading. These make students feel good, but cause forgetting and hence wasted time. Techniques such as retrieval practice, interleaving and spaced practice is the best way to revise and we use the Learning Scientists website to inform ourselves about that. I invite parents to check out the videos at <http://www.learningscientists.org/> to help. I genuinely think these scientists are the best in the world at explaining how we learn. For example, we know that retrieval practice (an example of which is flashcard revision) is hard and in the short-term feels like it doesn't work. But over a longer period of time it is shown in study after study to be more effective. Crucially, this is the case for everyone. It is not the case that people have different 'learning styles'. While they may have 'learning preferences', everyone benefits from the hard work that goes into retrieval practice. I suppose the best way to summarise this is the old adage that there "are no short-cuts" to real success.



Visits:

BFS has hosted visits from over 150 school leaders from across the country this year. They are blown away by the conduct of the pupils and the focus in lessons. We share all of our learning resources (insisting that if they make them better, they send them back). We know that one English booklet is now being used in Australia! All visitors are taken on a tour by our student leaders, who are some of the best ambassadors of the school.

In April we were privileged to welcome the Secretary of State for Education, Damian Hinds MP, to visit the school. He met with teachers, Trustees and governors and was particularly interested in what BFS does that is innovative in order to reduce teacher-workload. He was particularly interested because, as you know, our staff 'go the extra mile' and hence we demand more from our staff in terms of time and commitment. But we also try to cut out things that are potential time wasters – ie that don't make a big difference to our pupils and might prevent us from doing even better things.

In May I was also invited to visit the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street at a reception to thank teachers for their hard work. This is a real tribute to the work that goes on at BFS, and particularly to the teachers and support staff who do whatever is necessary to ensure our pupils are successful.

Staffing for 2018/19

I'm really pleased to inform you that we are fully staffed for September 2018. At a time when there are fewer teachers applying for jobs than a few years ago, we have attracted some great fields. This is a tribute to our current staff – who make BFS a great place to work – and the pupils whose conduct and personal demeanour make BFS a pleasant place to be!

Options and Preferences

Mr Moore has been working away at the timetable for next academic year and we will be informing year 9 pupils about their options choices and year 8 pupils about their preferences very soon. If there is a complication, and we couldn't offer the choice that the pupils made, we have already seen them to talk it through. Therefore most pupils can probably guess what they will be studying next year. Our year 7s will pick up Computing and Drama in year 8 next year to broaden their curriculum and I hope they are looking forward to it!

Plans for next year:

At BFS we are planning a more extensive professional learning programme next year. This means that we have booked some of the best educators in the world to come and talk to our staff so that they can deliver the best possible lessons and ensure the best possible progress. As you may know, we also go and visit the best schools in the country so that we can become one of them.

One of the things that staff often do is give up their time at weekends to develop, and more than half of the staff are attending a research in education conference on a Saturday in September. In addition to this, I can let you know that **Friday January 11th 2019** will be our remaining training day. I had written to you previously with the dates for the other four, and I have included these at the bottom of this letter as a reminder. The reason for this day is that BFS and Advantage Schools are hosting a conference over that Friday and Saturday that looks at the insights that cognitive science can offer educators, and we are flying in some of the best scientists in the world to support this.

The programme of professional learning that is available to BFS teachers is one of the best in the country, and we have invested significantly in this in order to become the best school we possibly can.

Meanwhile, the staff have been meeting with year 6 pupils and parents and welcoming them to the BFS family. It has been such a pleasure to get to know them. The school is now over-subscribed in all year groups, with a significant waiting list.

Uniform, Equipment list, Corrections and Interventions:

A reminder of the uniform and equipment list that pupils are expected to have every day at BFS. We reinforce this list daily, issuing corrections if pupils are not fully equipped:

Uniform & Equipment list

Because we have no bells at BFS – something we don't really notice as it's normal, but visitors always remark on how it adds to how calm the school is, we do insist that pupils wear a watch – recently some have been forgetting to do so, so we'd appreciate a reminder.

We have also recently reminded pupils that corrections are non-negotiable, and something that we have all signed up to in the home-school agreement. We are of course happy to explain why a correction was given, including to parents (though it is usually after the event) where necessary. We do this as soon as possible after the event so that we can all move on and our behaviour continues to improve. We have also reminded pupils that school finishes at 4pm. Golden Time is a privilege and not a right, and pupils shouldn't make arrangements for before the end of school. I'd like to thank parents for consistently reinforcing this at home. You working alongside us really does make the expectations of your children very clear indeed.

End of year assembly:

Our end of year assembly will take place on Friday 20th July at the Park Inn Hotel from 1.30pm. Should you wish to attend, you will require a ticket. You can obtain this by emailing info@bedfordreeschool.co.uk please note that due to limited capacity tickets are limited and on a first come, first served basis.

Trips:

We are looking forward to the inaugural expedition up Snowdon that year 7 (and some of year 8) are taking part in in a few weeks time. We hope to develop this so that all pupils in future years have access to a residential trip.

Recently we took a group of pupils to the Swiss Gardens & Shuttleworth collection. The staff there were very impressed with our students' behaviour. This was a wonderful opportunity for the year 10 GCSE Art group to work with a professional Botanical painter, who is a member of the Royal Horticultural Society and the Royal Society of Botanical painters. It enabled them to physically engage with their topic 'Natural Forms' by working from life in the garden and allowed them to gather materials and images to work from at school .

There are further art trips planned for next week when, on Tuesday 26th June year 9 visit to the National Gallery, and on Thursday 28th June year 8 visit to the National Portrait Gallery

Music:

It has once again been a busy time in music. The Salvation Army Just Brass initiative has seen some excellent student progress. We now have two brass bands – a beginner and an intermediate. We are celebrating their progress in a concern at the Salvation Army Congress Hall on Friday 29th June at 6.30pm. The Salvation Army are a wonderful part of the BFS family and we love working with them!

Music for All – we will be taking some of our violinists to the Fiddle Fiesta in July (our annual trip!). This is the first year that we have all of our students taking on a more difficult part in the orchestra.

Our year 11s final performances in a professional recording studio in Bedford was a lovely way to end their GCSE course, and we will be playing some of these pieces in the final assembly this year.

We have Proms in the Playground coming up – a showcase of all the performing arts electives that happen at BFS (on Wednesday 11th July at 6:30pm).

You may have seen the Bedfordshire Festival of Music Speech and Drama awards from earlier in the year on our website, but I have attached a report for your perusal.

Sport:

Summer term has the athletics, cricket, rounders and tennis competitions. BFS have teams entered for boys and girls in every year group. A total of 58 fixtures will be played from Easter until the summer holidays!

Notable performances so far this term has seen Emma in year 8, finish with a bronze in the 1500m at the District Athletics Championships and the year 9 cricket team win a close game against Redbourne School. The year 9 boys also had the pleasure of a cricket friendly at Bedford School.

In the next few weeks we have National School Sports Week (25th-29th June), Sports Awards (9th July) and Sports Day (17th July).

In the spring term sports that pupils participated in were cross country, badminton, handball, netball, dance and football. We also competed in a national basketball competition for year 7 in conjunction with the NBA. We represented the Portland Trailblazers in the full NBA kit.

60 fixtures were completed in 11 weeks and the school picked up its second ever district championship with the year 7/8 girls handball team winning the competition winning every game! Emma and Kiro both qualified for the county cross country championships with Emma finishing 12th, earning her a place as a reserve for the national championships representing Bedfordshire.

Work experience:

We wish year 10 well with work experience during the week beginning 25th June 2018. I know they will make us very proud.

Canteen plans:

We have been successfully awarded a significant grant to expand our canteen seating area. Work on this may take some time. We know that, despite recent improvements, changing the caterers with the introduction of an additional till, this is an area we'd really like to improve on further and so we wanted to let you know that this is coming.

Electives:

Pupils have been completely immersed in some amazing electives this term. From the beautiful journals in creative journal club, through to the nerdiness of 'world cup football statistics' it's been great to see pupils working hard on something they have chosen. I'm particularly impressed by the electives that have been about helping others – the green environment Eco Team and OAK – Organised Acts of Kindness. I also have to say that I was impressed with the pupils who stayed behind on a Friday to wash my car – though it did cost me a small fortune!

Governance:

We do have a space for a parent governor on our BFS local governing body. If you are interested, please contact me on elogan@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk and I'd be delighted to have a longer conversation about this.

Social media:

If you haven't already, make sure you keep an eye on our facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/bedfordfreeschool> and twitter account - [@bedsfreeschool](https://twitter.com/bedsfreeschool). There are also two other twitter accounts for subject-specific news - [@bfsdrama_music](https://twitter.com/bfsdrama_music) and [@english_bfs](https://twitter.com/english_bfs).

Thanks to parents:

Parents' evening attendance is over 90% for all year groups and very close to 100% in most. We thank you for your attendance and engaging with the school. As you know, we take our home-school agreement very seriously and we're delighted that you do as well. I know on the few occasions where parents have been unable to make it they've taken exceptional measures to meet with us the next day or soon afterwards. We continue to work in partnership and know that this is the route to success for each of our pupils.

I will write to you again at the end of term. In the meantime, if there is anything you wish to raise with my colleagues or myself, please do not hesitate to get in touch. In particular, if you would like to look round the school at any time, please let us know – we love showing you round!

The remainder of this letter contains term dates and our update from much earlier in the term on the festival of music, speech and drama.

With very best wishes,

Stuart Lock
Executive Principal

Key Dates:

18 th – 22 nd June 2018	Year 10 Mock exams
25 th – 29 th June 2018	Year 10 work experience
	End of Year exams for Y7-9 + Development week – various activities and trips.
26 th June 2018	Year 9 Trip to the National Gallery
28 th June 2018	Year 8 Trip to the National Portrait Gallery
28 th June 2018	Year 6 Transfer Day
9 th July 2018	Sports Awards (by invitation)
11 th July 2018	Summer Showcase, Proms in the Playground
13 th – 15 th July 2018	Year 7 Trip to Snowdon
17 th July 2018	Sports Day, Bedford Athletics Stadium
20 th July 2018	End of Year Celebration Assembly, Park Inn (tickets only)
New Academic Year – 2018-19	
5 th – 7 th September	New Year 7s start at BFS
10 th September 2018	Year 8 – 11 return to school
1 st October 2018	Staff Training Day
22 nd – 26 th October 2018	Half Term

Please note that all dates are subject to change/added to and we will notify you as soon as any changes are made.

Bedford Free School at the Bedfordshire Festival of Music, Speech and Drama 2018

Here at BFS we enjoy celebrating our student's successes and over last week we have had several take part in the Bedfordshire Festival of Music, Speech and Drama held at the Corn Exchange.

Beginning on Sunday 4th of March and culminating in a gala on Sunday 11th March, our students took part in several of the categories.

Sunday 4th March saw Hannah and Charlotte compete in the Musical Theatre category and Lizzie compete in the Piano Solo category for Year 10-11s with Charlotte winning the trophy for 1st place for her Musical Theatre performance.



Hannah
Musical Theatre Performer
(Y10-11)



Charlotte
Musical Theatre Winner
(Y10-11)



Lizzie
Solo Piano performer

Tuesday 6th March saw our highest represented day of the event with 5 students participating. Our Year 9 and 10 students took part in the Dramatic Solo category and in the words of Miss Damon our Drama teacher "Although none were placed in the top three they came away smiling and really proud of themselves and they are winners to me!"

From L to R - Orla, Sathya, Precillia, Athena and Isha.



Thursday 8th March saw Hanniel compete in the Electric Guitar solo and Millie representing BFS in the Dramatic Solo for Year 7-8s. There were 16 competing in the Dramatic Solo and although not a finalist, Millie gave a strong performance. Huge congratulations to Hanniel who won the Electric Guitar solo performance category.



Millie
Dramatic Solo (Y7-8) performer



Haniel
Electric Guitar Solo, Winner

Friday 9th March was the second appearance for Athena who competed in the Musical Theatre category for Year 8-9s. Although sadly not placed in the top three her performance was outstanding and made everyone who knows her extremely proud.



Athena Musical Theatre performer (Y8-9)

Saturday 10th March, moving in to the weekend saw our final two competitors. Ruth represented us in the Shakespeare Solo for Year 8-10s category and Seth performed his GCSE composition. Unfortunately, Ruth was not placed in the winning group but again in the words of Miss Damon “oh my life she was amazing”. Seth won his category and was later invited to compete in the Gala on Sunday along with Charlotte.



Ruth, Solo Shakespeare Performer (Y8-9)



Seth, GCSE Composition Winner

Out of the 1200 performers in the whole festival only 19 are chosen to compete in the gala. Charlotte and Seth were chosen to compete in the Singing category along with one other singer for the 'Woodfine, Lousada Challenge Cup and Charlotte took the top prize.



(L-R) Miss Goodship, Seth, Charlotte and Miss Damon At the Gala.

A special thank you to Miss Goodship and Miss Damon for their hard work in preparing and supporting our students during the festival and a very well done to all our students who took part and gave their very best. We're proud of you.

To keep up to date with performing arts at Bedford Free School then follow our twitter page: [@BFSdrama_music](https://twitter.com/BFSdrama_music)