

19th September 2014

Dear Parents & Carers,

A full cycle completed already...

The summer holidays already feel in the distant past, and already students and staff have completed 12 days of lessons – and a full cycle of the timetable.

I have to say we have been incredibly impressed at the way that everyone has started. As a group of teachers we have all committed to observing one another in action a lot more this year – and as I have been doing my part in this, I can tell that there is already a qualitatively different feel to things.

Reminder – Open Evening next week – ALL WELCOME!

Next Thursday is one of THE big nights of the year for us as a school, Open Evening. One of the ways we do things differently at BFS is how **we invite ALL our current families to come and visit us** – the site and general set up of the school continues to evolve as we grow, and so you will notice changes between now and last year.

Things kick off at 6.30pm and will wrap up at 8.30pm.

Students will be helping us with the running of the night so many of your children will be coming home with permission slips for this in the next day or two.

I made a mistake last week, regarding when school will close that day: **we will close at 3.30pm** (not 3.15pm as I'd said). This way we only cut off the Prep session, and not affect any lessons at all.

Please do spread the word to prospective families – being a secondary school in an area with mainly middle schools, it is a bit tricky getting our message directly to Year 6 students in many of their current middle schools, so your help in advertising the night to them is vital.

Parents dropping students off for school

It is a shame that I need to revisit this topic so soon into term – but it is necessary as unfortunately some families have been letting us down by not sticking to the rules regarding drop-offs/pick-ups.

We need to be good neighbours & the Melbourne Street car park is only a short distance away – yet it appears that some people have been using the Peking Palace/FiveSite car park, and blocking its legitimate use for those who actually work there. We have also received reports of BFS families parking up in the drive of Homebrook House on Cardington Road.

This is completely unacceptable & has the potential to damage the reputation of our school – the school that your children attend. Please desist from this immediately.

REALLY IMPORTANT: Please keep us in the loop re. illnesses

I always refer to BFS as a family – and one way that we can all look after one another is through keeping the school informed if any of our students pick up illnesses that can have implications for others.

The obvious ones are chicken pox, measles, mumps, etc – and **it is particularly important we are informed about these as we know of at least one BFS family where a younger sibling could become extremely ill if unknowingly exposed to them.**

In a similar vein – albeit much less serious – I should flag up that nits don't stop at year 6, and we've been made aware that there have been a few cases already this term. Feel free to regularly check on your children & **let us know if anything shows up so we can flag up to others.**

Keeping you informed when students are kept back at school

We are passionate that no child falls behind in their work or is left unchallenged when their behaviour falls below our high standards.

You will all recall that **part of the Home-School agreement gets parents to acknowledge & agree to the School's legal right to detain students after school any day that it sees fit.** We do our very best to let parents know on the rare occasions when this is necessary, and up until now we have endeavoured to do it through a phone call in person.

This is extremely time consuming & it has not always been possible for busy teachers to get through to families in a timely fashion. To ensure better consistency, **next week we will switch to informing parents via text & email.** With this in mind, **please ensure that we have an up-to-date email address and mobile phone number** in order that you don't miss out on any messages communicated to you in this manner.

Building partnerships

No man is an island, and neither is a school - **the best schools are at the heart of the family of local schools**, and we aspire to be no different.

I think it's fair to say that, like many new things, BFS was conceived and born amidst some controversy. (I still know more about planning law than is good for any person.) **One of the many delights of the past two years has been getting to know other local schools** and building links with them to benefit both our students and the wider community.

Two examples that spring to mind include being able to use the Bedford Sixth Form's theatre for the Xmas panto, or taking students to Great Denham Primary for paired reading.

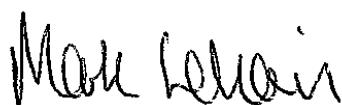
We have always been proud of the top quality sports facilities that we have been able to access for our students – for example AFC Kempston, the Bunyan Centre and of course the Bedford International Athletics Stadium.

I am delighted to announce that we are now able to add to these through a partnership with King's Oak Primary School (formerly Stephenson Lower, which has taken on the former Harrowden Middle site too). Not only does this give us additional sports facilities that are literally 4 minutes from school, but it provides us with a "home ground" for the many sporting fixtures lined up this term and beyond, as well as the chance for our students to work with the primary students at King's Oak too.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank our Business Manager **Mrs Edge** & our new Head of PE **Mr Cox** getting this all sorted from our end – and to **Ali England**, the Head of King's Oak Primary for being so open to the idea. It's going to transform PE and sport at BFS, to the benefit of everyone.

In my next newsletter I would like to include an update on some wonderful student successes we are aware of – so if you have something that we may not be aware of and that you would like us to share, please get in touch.

All the very best,



Mark Lehain.