

14th September 2015

Dear Parents & Carers,

Happy New (Academic) Year!

A big welcome back, to those of you with us last year – and to those joining us this term: a big welcome to the BFS family.

I won't inundate you with information in this first newsletter, so I will keep it brief and focus on:

- The summer's exam results
- Upcoming Open Events
- Key dates for your diary

This summer's GCSE results

Hopefully by now you will have heard about our first, very successful, set of GCSE results. We believe that **we came second in the Borough and top of the town schools**. This demonstrates pretty amazing progress for the students concerned too: when they were 11, they were significantly behind the national average in their SATs.

We are not resting on our laurels though: it was a solid start and **I will not be satisfied until we are one of the top performing schools in the Country**. In spite of efforts by local teachers and schools, standards at 16 and 18 in Bedford are still far too low – well below half of students in Bedford & Kempston schools got five good GCSEs including English and maths this summer. No one I speak to is satisfied with this.

As other local schools become primaries or secondaries, there will inevitably be disruptions elsewhere. Whilst here at BFS **your children are insulated from this**, we know we have a responsibility to support other schools and do our bit to ensure students elsewhere receive the standard of education they deserve.

We have already had a number of families get in touch since Results Day with a view to moving their children to us – if you have any friends who have been sitting on the fence until now, please encourage them to come and look around to see BFS for themselves. With this in mind...

Open events

Open Evening - Wednesday, September 23rd, 6.30pm – 8.30pm

Open Morning - Saturday, 3rd October, 10.00am – 12.00pm

As usual many of our students will be helping us with these, and in the next week or so your child may be coming home with permission slips for this.

Many schools focus these kinds of events simply at prospective students and their families. **We do things differently at BFS**, and make these events a general celebration of everything that we have achieved since we opened, **so you are all invited to come along and see what we're up to!**

Please note: **we will close school at 3.30pm on the 23rd**, to allow for everyone to prepare for the evening.

Please do spread the word to prospective families too. **If you have any friends whose children have just started Year 6, please remind them that this autumn is their one chance to apply to BFS**, as we no longer have an admission point in Year 9. Given the school system in Bedford, it is a bit tricky getting our message to Year 6 students in their middle schools, so your help in publicising this would be gratefully received!

In a similar vein, if you know of families whose child is in year 7, 8 and 9, and they are looking at their options, **we have a limited number of places in these year groups at the moment**.

Key dates for this term

Below are some key dates for your diary for this term. I'd like to draw your attention to some really important information evenings that we are holding early in the term. We are holding these this year due to feedback from families in the past that they would appreciate an occasion where they can be talked through everything that they should expect over the course of the year.

The sessions for Years 10 and 11 are largely about surviving the stresses and strains that the GCSE years bring, and planning ahead for Sixth Form.

The sessions for Years 8 and 9 are designed to explain our new assessment system now that schools no longer use "levels". They are also to help prepare families for the joys of the core teenage years... although I know from discussions that many of you feel you have a "Kevin the teenager" in your midst already. (With the oldest of my four girls now nine, I know it is only a short time before I too face these joys at home as well as at work.)

16 th – 18 th September	Y11 Geography field trip
23 rd September	Open Evening – 6.30pm – 8.30pm; school finishes at 3.30pm; no HW club that day
1 st October	Year 10 – "Getting your child (and you!) through GCSEs" evening Year 11 – "Getting your child (and you!) through Year 11" evening
3 rd October	Open Morning – 10.00am – noon
8 th October	Year 7 Progress Evening – 5.30pm – 8.30pm with form tutors; Year 8 – "Surviving the tricky Year 8" information evening School finishes at 3.30pm
23 rd October	School finishes for half term – 4.15pm as usual; no HW club this day
2 nd November	School opens again – 08.25am as usual
5 th November	Year 9 Progress Evening – 5.30pm – 8.30pm School finishes at 3.30pm
w/c 16 th November	Year 11 GCSE Mock Exams Week
3 rd December	Year 8 Progress Evening – 5.30pm – 8.30pm School finishes at 3.30pm
10 th December	Year 11 Progress Evening – 5.30pm – 8.30pm School finishes at 3.30pm
18 th December	End of term – school finished 3.15pm
5 th January	Start of Spring Term – 08.25am as usual
14 th January	Year 10 Progress Evening – 5.30pm – 8.30pm School finishes at 3.30pm

All the best,

Mark Lehain