

14th April 2016

Dear Parents & Carers,

The business end of the year...

I'd hoped to write out to everyone again before Easter but the small matter of an Ofsted inspection got in the way in the penultimate week of term! Although short, it was a very smooth, focused half term, and we have continued to be pleased with the way students have conducted themselves.

The recent Ofsted inspection

A massive thank you to those who completed the Ofsted Parent View survey or who wrote in to the inspection team. The response for a school of our size was impressive, and the feedback overwhelmingly positive. (Although you know me – I won't be truly happy until things are perfect.)

We went out of our way to run the school *exactly* as we would have done without visitors being around, and it was a joy to see how staff and students stepped up to the mark to assist inspectors in their work. Mrs Herron, Mr Donald and myself were pretty tied up with the inspection throughout the two days, so I'd like to thank the staff for running the show without us - in particular **Mr Blake** for heading up a lot of things that would otherwise have come our way.

As you'll know, we're not allowed to share outcomes with anyone until we have the final version of the official report, but I've commented on the draft report and expect the final version to be with us any day now. **I am looking forward to sharing it with everyone.**

Annie

A quick reminder that the school musical "**Annie**" is on tonight and tomorrow at the Trinity Arts Theatre (at the old Bedford High School). The performances start at 7pm – there are some tickets still available, and they will be available on the door.

The good news is that Miss Damon denied me the roles of both Annie and Daddy Warbucks in the end, so the quality of performance will be top notch. We're looking forward to seeing lots of you there!

Building works

As you will no doubt be aware of by now, the building works are well underway. The erection of the scaffolding alone was in itself an epic achievement! We have had to change various things at various times to work around stuff, and students have been fantastic at just getting on with things.

Currently we are having to put up with extremely noisy work on the front roof. The builders are cutting in to the structure, in order to prepare for the steel framework that the extension will be built around. This is undoubtedly causing some disruption for staff and students – but it will be for a short period of time, and was unavoidable if we wanted everything ready for the autumn.

We will keep you posted on developments during the course of the term. The key thing for now is that **everything is still running to time**, so please keep fingers crossed that this continues.

Uniform

A massive thank you to all our families for the continued support in maintaining our high standards of uniform. We previously reminded people that skirts needed to be one of three selected styles that could be purchased from Josens, and **it was great to see nearly every student in such a skirt when we returned to school this week.**

We made the change to "official" skirts at the request of families - I hope that it helps to simplify things for parents, and assists in avoiding disagreements as to what is or isn't acceptable!

Saturday Taster Sessions for Year 5s and 6s – Saturday 23rd April

A reminder that our next Saturday Taster Sessions are on April 23rd – should you have any children in these year groups who want to experience how we do things at BFS, or know of any other families in this situation, please encourage them to come along.

We already have a record number of students booked in for this day, but can take more if need be, so please spread the word.

Looking ahead...

The summer term really is the business end of the year. School was busy throughout Easter with staff running support sessions for our Year 11s – **we are now only a few weeks away from the exam season**. I always find myself getting nervous at this time, as everyone has worked so hard to get to this point, and everyone wants things to go well for our students.

We have reflected on how the year to date has gone, and **we genuinely feel that our current Year 11s are the best prepared cohort we have worked with**, both at BFS and our previous schools. It's not always been easy, but we believe that come their exams they will be exactly where we'd hoped they be back in September.

Having been through the GCSE season as a school last year, we know exactly how to organise ourselves so as to minimise disruption to the rest of school as exams go on.

We are not just focusing on Year 11 though –**we have plans for every year group, to ensure that everyone makes the most of this long term** (14 weeks). Some schools may take their foot off the pedal in the summer – not BFS!

There are 50 more students at BFS now than the start of the academic year. We are now, to all intents and purposes, full in Years 8 – 11. The only year group with any spaces is our current Year 7 – and **once our Ofsted report is published I expect these to fill up pretty quickly**. This incredible influx of students is overwhelmingly down to one thing: word-of-mouth from existing students & their families. It's not always been easy to take in and induct so many new students, but everyone has rallied around to ensure we did this as smoothly as possible.

At a time of uncertainty for most schools, BFS can look ahead to the next academic year with growing confidence. Not only are our current numbers extremely healthy, **we have had a record number of applications to join our Year 7 this September**. Indeed, the waiting list is so long that I have had to consider whether we slightly expand the size of that year group (and have only done so knowing that it wouldn't affect the feel of the place in a negative way.)

Education has been in the press a lot recently – especially with the news that **every school in England will have to become an academy by 2022**, and that most will be expected to join up with others to form small groups of schools known as "multi-academy trusts". Given this, plus our recent inspection, and the two-tier changes going on locally, **we are in position to manage all these things to the advantage of our students**. The Governors and I are considering options at the moment – and will write out to you all should we decide anything in this regard.

In the meantime, thank you once again for your ongoing support – and don't hesitate to get in touch should you wish to give me and any member of the BFS team feedback.

All the best,

Mark Lehain.

Key dates

14 th & 15 th April	"Annie" – school musical at Trinity Arts Theatre (tickets still available on the door)
21st April	Year 10 Progress Evening (students released at 3.30pm; Homework Club still runs until 6pm)
23 rd April	Saturday Taster Sessions – for Y5s and Y6s – 930am – 1230pm
2 nd May	Bank Holiday Monday – school closed
3 rd May	Summer uniform starts – if they wish, students need not wear school jumpers; all other aspects of uniform remain the same
5 th May	Year 8 Progress Evening
30 th May – 3 rd June	Half Term – Y11 Revision sessions running all week
6 th June	Back to school – week ONE on timetable
w/c 20 th June	Year 10 Exam Week
27 th /28 th /29 th June	Year 7, 8 and 9 – exams in core subjects AND Development Days
w/c 27 th June	Year 10 Work Experience
6 th July	Year 6s visiting for Transfer Day
14 th July	Sports Day – at Bedford International Athletic Stadium – details to follow
22 nd July	End of Year Celebration Assembly – all welcome - more details to follow Term Ends for summer!
25 th August	GCSE Results Day