

20th June 2016

Dear Parents & Carers,

Preparing for next year...

There is quite a lot of detail in today's newsletter, so please bear with me! We're at the point where we are trying to finalise details for the next academic year and, as ever, we've been looking around at other top-performing schools to see what they do, in order to emulate some of their practice.

It was looking elsewhere that gave me the idea for electives and, a couple of years ago, prep, and both of these developments have proven to be both popular and effective in achieving their aims. However, we're not ones to rest on our laurels, and we want to pilot a few things before the term is out to see if they should be permanent features at BFS.

However, before those, first a couple of updates...

Friends of BFS Quiz Night – rescheduled for July 15th

Another reminder that our rescheduled Friends of BFS Quiz Night will be on Friday July 15th – new entry forms etc out this week.

Sky Sports "Living for Sport" awards

I have had good cause to thank **Mr Cox** for many things since he joined us in 2014. As well as working to improve the core PE we offer students day-to-day, and ramping up the number of fixtures we do as a school, he has also put huge efforts into broadening participation in general.

Following nominations for the Sky Sports "Living for Sport" awards this year, we are delighted to be able to share that **Mr Cox was Highly Commended in the "Teacher of the Year" category**, with the watersports project he created also **Highly Commended**. On top of this, **Naval Bajwa was one of only 18 to be Highly Commended in their "Students of the Year" category!** We had the privilege of Anthony Clark, a former Olympic badminton player, visiting us last week to present Naval with her award. Well done to Naval, the other students who took part on the project, and also Mr Cox for leading all of this.

The start to the autumn term

I have tried to keep people as up-to-date as possible with regards to the ongoing building project. With its completion slipping from September to Christmas I have had to look carefully at exactly what works are going on when, in order to ensure that we can smoothly run the school.

As well as the extension on the front of the school, **we are reroofing the rear part of the building, and placing solar panels there too**. The scaffolding for these works is going up already, and originally it would have been dismantled and the playground clear for when our 500+ students returned in September – **however, this is now unlikely to be the case**.

With that in mind, **we have decided to stagger the start to the autumn term**, to ensure that we have a clear playground when all of our students are back. This means that instead of all students returning to school on the same day as we'd originally planned, it will now work like so:

- **Year 7 and Year 11** – return on Thursday 8th September
- **Year 8, 9 and 10 Reward Trip to Alton Towers** – Friday 9th September
- **All students return & lessons start as usual** – Monday 12th September

I daresay that our students will enjoy the slightly later start to term – but I completely understand that for some families this could be awkward as it is a change to our original plans. We looked at every possible way to avoid it, and this felt like the way that would cause least disruption within school.

Piloting changes to the school day

Whenever I am trying to explain to people the kind of thing that we are aiming to achieve here at BFS, I tend to point to the same few high-performing schools and talk about specific things that they do there. King Solomon Academy, Michaela Community School & Mossbourne, in London, and Dixons Trinity Academy, in Bradford, are the main ones that I use – and being an ideas 'magpie', I have reached the point where I want us to make some changes next year in order to better emulate them.

However, before plunging headlong in to any change, we are going to pilot them for the last few weeks of term, in the same way that we piloted prep back in 2014.

The main changes that we are looking to examine & pilot are as follows:

- carving out **dedicated reading time for all students every day** (to rocket-boost our "100 Classics" scheme, and give our students greater 'cultural literacy');
- **introducing a split-lunch model** (with half the school on lunch whilst the other half are doing reading in their form groups, to help students get through the canteen more efficiently & in more comfort);
- **an end-of-day lineup** – to allow us to reflect together how the day has gone, in a similar fashion to the way we think ahead to the day in our morning lineup;
- **bringing forward the end of the official school day to 4pm on Monday – Thursday** (partly to enable more after school clubs to happen, and partly so that in the winter months most students are away before dusk; Homework Club would continue to the same time as now).

We are still finalising the exact timings within the school day, and will brief students when this is pinned down. We would still have six lessons a day and prep, and Fridays would still finish at 3.15pm - the changes are in how we put everything together and which staff lead form time in the morning and prep.

I am confident that our students will have lots to tell us about the various changes – and I would welcome families' feedback too, once the pilot is complete. **For now, the key thing I need families to be aware of is that from 4th July, for the rest of term, we will generally be finishing at 4pm.**

I should say here that I genuinely have no fixed idea as to exactly which changes, if any, we will make – hence the pilot. The aim is to make things flow more smoothly, get our students working more effectively, and keep things more sustainable for all our hard-working staff.

All the best,

Mark Lehain.

Key dates

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
5 th July	“Meet your Tutor” evening for Year 6s
6 th July	Year 6s visiting for Transfer Day
8 th July	Sports Awards Evening
14 th July	Sports Day – at Bedford International Athletic Stadium – details to follow
15 th July	Friends of BFS Quiz Night
22 nd July	End of Year Celebration Assembly – all welcome - more details to follow
25 th August	GCSE Results Day
5 th September	Staff return to school
8 th September	Year 7 and Year 11 return to school – usual time of 0825
9 th September	Year 8, 9 and 10 Reward Trip to Alton Towers
12 th September	All students in school, lessons commence, lineup at usual time of 0825