

12th February 2016

Dear Parents & Carers,

Spring already...

Where did this half term go?! It seems only yesterday that we were wrapping up autumn term and getting ready for Christmas. I think that one reason why time has flown so quickly is that we crammed so much in to this very short half-term. Once again we had a jam-packed fixtures schedule. We have had seven sports fixtures in the last week alone; we even won some of these! As I sit here typing this (Friday afternoon), twenty-two students have just set off on a ski trip, twenty-four electives are running, and I've just found out that we'll be making a record number of offers for Year 7 this September. (More about this next time I think.)

All the hard work by everyone is paying off and it is nice to be in the position where, whilst schools around us are having to contend with significant changes & disruption, we are settled and able to focus entirely on our students and their performance.

Friends of BFS

Change is afoot here! The Friends of Bedford Free School would like to thank Mary Morrison for all her work as Chair of FBFS, and welcome Amanda Briscoe as our new Chair. Amanda is brimming with plans for relaunching this group, and would love to hear from parents and other people. **The next meeting is the first week back, on Thursday 25th February, at 7.30pm.** If you can make it along, that would be great - but if you can't but have a brilliant fundraising idea for an event or can offer help at an event, please contact us here on friends@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk

Also, please put the **18th March in your diaries – we have a Quiz Night & raffle planned for then.** I'm determined to win this year if at all possible – if anyone wants to form a dream team with me, let me know...

Uniform & equipment reminders

I think we can genuinely say that overall our students are the smartest they have ever been since the school opened! We are grateful for the effort families put into ensuring students are properly dressed and equipped for school – it doesn't go unnoticed, and we know that it isn't always easy to hold the line in things with teenagers.

You'll remember that last year, following parental feedback, **we designated a small number of styles of school skirts at Josens as "official"** – to help families avoid any battles with their children over what is and isn't appropriate for school!

We said at the time that we would allow a year for students to get these, so that they could make the switch when they next purchased a skirt as a matter of course. Virtually all skirts in school now are one of the approved variety, but for those who haven't yet made the switch, **I thought I'd flag up again that we expect all skirts to be of the official style from Easter.**

(The only exceptions to this are Year 11 students – we wouldn't ask them to make this purchase just for the last few months of school.)

Any queries about this – don't hesitate to get in touch with our school skirt guru Mrs Herron.

Building works – ready, set...

It has been a long wait, but we will finally see builders on site from February 29th! All being well, aside from a few periods of scheduled disruption when we'll have cranes hoisting steel supports up onto the roof, students shouldn't notice too much going on. I'd like to **thank Mrs Edge for working so closely with out contractors behind the scenes** to get everything lined up & ready to go.

Year 11 Mocks

The first week back from half-term will see our Year 11s sitting their last set of mock GCSEs. Whilst there will be some disruption caused by us having to re-room lessons, we know from experience that this is a great way to prepare our students for the real thing. We're forecasting a fantastic set of grades for this summer – and good luck to our Year 11 as they spend next week revising for the mocks!

We have scheduled in a Progress Evening for Year 11s before Easter – and will run it like the last one, with grade sheets being issued on the night

Year 9 – GCSE Options & Progress Evening – 17th March

We are approaching the time of year when our Year 9s are considering which subjects they want to choose for the GCSE options. They should make time now to discuss with their teachers which subjects they are particularly keen on pursuing. Parents & carers will also have the opportunity to discuss this with staff on **March 17th, when we will be holding an Options & Progress Evening in school.**

(Rather than having two separate events we have decided to combine these – thus allowing families to consider option subjects in the light of staff feedback.)

English Speaking Union & Poetry successes

Mr Scanlan & the English department have been extremely busy with public speaking and poetry this term. A big well done to Jess Bass for winning the BFS "Poetry By Heart" competition. Also, we entered a team in the local round of the English Speaking Union's public speaking competition – and two of our students won prizes for their individual performances! Congratulations to all those who took part, with a particular mention for Kayleigh Hales & Caleb Savery, who won "Outstanding Personality" and "Best Chairperson" respectively.

All-in-all then, lots of good news to share. In my next newsletter after half term I will give an update on where we have got to on a number of things. In the meantime – have a great half term!

All the best...

Mark Lehain.

Key dates

15 th – 19 th February	Half Term Some Year 11s in school by invitation
12 th – 20 th February	Ski Trip to Austria
22 nd – 26 th February	Year 11 Mock Exam Week
25 th February	Friends of BFS meeting – 7.30pm – in school restaurant
10 th March	Year 11 Progress Evening
17 th March	Year 9 – GCSE Options & Progress Evening
18 th March	Friends of BFS – Quiz Night & Raffle
24 th March	End of Spring Term - school closes for Easter holidays
25 th March	Good Friday – school closed
Easter Holidays	Year 11 GCSE revision & catch up sessions
11 th April	Students return to school (week TWO on timetable)