

23rd February 2015

Dear Parents & Carers,

Making progress!

I hope everyone managed to get at least some rest over the half-term holiday. It was, as ever, busy in school: much of the week saw catch-up and revision sessions for Year 11s, and we had people in to replace lots of the tired, old carpets around the school. This has *really* lifted the parts of the building affected – and made me even more excited about refurbishing the “up” staircase in school over Easter (perhaps the most run down bit of school.)

With this in mind, I’d like to remind everyone of one of my pet hates within school: chewing gum! As a relentless chewer myself (out of school), I understand the joys of a fresh minty taste! However, **it is absolutely forbidden in school** – and with thousands of pounds being invested in new carpets, etc, we really need to take care of it. Alas, a small number of students seem to have got into anti-social habits when it comes to disposing of their gum – if we find students with gum, they will be sanctioned accordingly. Please remind your child of this.

However, we’re not standing still – more improvements are on the way...

Funding secured for hall & PE facilities onsite

We had some amazing news just before half term: we have secured significant funding to build a hall, changing rooms and others facilities on the roof at the front of the school building!

The original plans for the school had incorporated these – alas, austerity saw them removed as plans for the school site developed during 2011. However, with the help of some key people we have convinced the Department for Education to review that decision, and so we are now pulling together a project team to oversee the works, to start as soon as possible!

Many people have helped us along the way, but I would like to take the opportunity to thank a few here. Inputs from Richard Fuller, the MP for Bedford & Kempston, and Colin Foster, the Chief Education Officer at Bedford Borough were helpful along the way – given the circumstances in which the school originally opened it was great to have the support of both of these people.

All being well, everything should be built and finished by this time next year, possibly sooner, and we’ll keep you posted on things as we go! Details of things as they stand can be found on the school website & on our Facebook page too: <http://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/blog/post.php?s=2015-02-11-bfs-continues-to-grow> and <https://www.facebook.com/bedfordfreeschool>.

Instrumental music lessons for all Year 7s

Another exciting development that we are now in the position to introduce is that of instrumental music lessons for all Year 7 students! Having experienced personally the transformative power of music – picking up a guitar aged 12 literally changed my life! - I always wanted to be in the position where BFS can offer as many students as possible the chance to learn an instrument & feel the joy that comes from slowly getting to grips with music.

Thanks to some hard work behind the scenes by Miss Goodship, **we will be able to offer violin and guitar lessons to all Year 7s from Easter until the summer holidays** – so every student can try them out and see if it is something that they want to pursue. It won’t cost them a penny, and we will even be able to loan them the instruments.

From September we will roll out the scheme to new Year 7s, and they will have a full year of lessons.

It is all part of our long-term plan to grow our own musicians and ensure that performing arts at BFS is put on the map. Given the good news above about the school hall, **within a year or so we’ll hopefully a fully functioning orchestra AND somewhere for them to perform too.**

Year 9 – Options Evening – next Thursday

A quick reminder that we are looking forward to seeing ALL Year 9 students and their families at next Thursday's Options Evening. We will be running the information session twice – at **7pm and 7.45pm** – so please come to whichever one is most convenient.

This is **a chance to answer any questions you or your child(ren) may have about their studies in Years 10 and 11** – so please do make sure you come along.

(And remember – a very important **Progress Evening is the following Thursday, 12th March** – in order to discuss with subject staff their readiness for GCSEs...)

The Hope Foundation Summer Ball – 20th June

As many of you will already know, BFS supports an orphanage in South Africa called "House of Hope". We do this through the Hope Foundation, a charity originally set up a few years ago by some local people – including our very own Miss Turney.

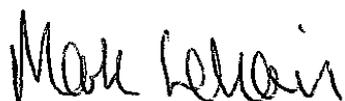
A summer fundraising ball is planned for the 20th June & we'd love to see as many people linked to BFS there as possible – I'll certainly be getting my tuxedo out for the occasion! Details can be found on the school website here: <http://www.bedfordreeschool.co.uk/blog/post.php?s=2015-02-10-hope-foundation-summer-ball>

Looking ahead...

This half term is only 5 weeks long – it will fly by and Easter will be upon us before we know it. It has been an exciting few weeks with a flurry of good news for the school, but we cannot & will not rest on our laurels. With your support, we will be pushing them all the way along.

With the support of the staff here, Year 11 is shaping up nicely for their mock GCSEs next week, Year 10 is making great progress across all their subjects, and Year 9 is clearly taking their GCSE option requests seriously. It is also a delight to see Year 8 maturing as both nature & the BFS "way" work their magic, and as for Year 7... they are simply a delight to work with. And of course, we are working hard to ensure that as many people as possible join us in Year 7 this September (keep spreading the word!)

All the very best,



Mark Lehain.

Key dates

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| w/c 2nd March | Year 11 mock exams week |
| 5th March | Year 9 – Options Evening – 7pm and again at 7.45pm |
| 12th March | Year 9 Progress Evening – school finishes at 3.30pm |
| 19th March | Year 11 Progress Evening – school finishes at 3.30pm |
| 26th March | Year 10 Progress Evening – school finishes at 3.30pm |
| 27th March | Year 11s in schools for GCSE preparation School closed for Years 7, 8, 9 and 10 |
| 30th March – 10th April | Easter Holidays "Easter School" sessions for Year 11 and other students |
| 13th April | Start of summer term – 8.25am NB week TWO on the timetable |