

21st July 2017

Dear Parents & Carers,

A thousand thanks...

Phew! We've made it through to the very last day of the academic year – and what a time it has been. Just flicking through the newsletters I've sent out is exhausting, as they give a sense of all the events and opportunities that staff at BFS have made available to our students. Even in the last few weeks we have managed to pack so much in – including our Summer Showcase, Sports Award evening and Sports Day.

The end of the summer term is always a slightly funny period. It's the time of year when we say goodbye to students and staff moving on, but are also planning ahead for the autumn term, and all the new students and staff that will join.

On a personal level, this time around it has felt more intense as I have wanted to get so many things completed so that there is less for my successor to pick up come September. I think I'm about there now – and I wanted to wrap things up today by saying a few farewells & some thank-yous.

The farewells first. We send our very best wishes to colleagues moving on this summer. Promotions, parenthood and PGCEs beckon, amongst other things, and while we'd love the BFS family to stay together unchanged forever, it's also complimentary when people move on and to take a little bit of the BFS way to pastures new.

I particularly want to say good luck to Mr Donald, who is relocating with his family to Chichester. Since 2013 he has been my right-hand man in all things curriculum, and he has transformed for the better what and how we teach. While he pretends to be grumpy and devoid of emotion, I have always been impressed at the quiet dedication and care he has shown our children; the number of former students who come back to see him is testimony to the impact he made to their lives.

And to other colleagues leaving today – good luck, and don't be strangers! #BFSforlife

Now on to the thank-yous...

First of all – to the family and friends of BFS, past and present, without which the school would never have existed, nor would it have thrived since we opened in 2012. I will always be grateful that you put your trust in us to look after your children. We have shown what is possible when teachers and the community working together can achieve, but there is so much more still to do. Please continue to stand firm behind the school and its staff; schools are only successful for their students when supported 100% by families.

Next, I want to thank the BFS Governors. These are the hidden heroes of any school, but they have had more to deal with at BFS than most, given the challenges we had along the way to getting open!

In particular I need to thank Nigel Syson, David Hill, Lorna Godden and Jo Morey, who have been along for the ride right from the start, and Liz Arden, who has made such an impact since coming on board in 2015. Thank you for the support, challenge and friendship you have provided over the years.

And as for the BFS staff... well, what can I say?! It's been a privilege to work with them. Our students are so lucky to have such a dedicated, knowledgeable, and professional team, across all the various roles at the school. And while it's not always been easy, I've always known I can rely on people to follow through and deliver for the kids. It has been the privilege of a lifetime to lead them.

Every single member of the team has played their part, but I need to single out Mrs Herron, Mr Blake, and Mrs Edge, long-serving members of the BFS Band of Brothers. Most would never be aware of the time and effort that they put into the school but the difference it all makes is immeasurable. The

smooth running of the school on a day-to-day basis is largely built on their work and I can think of no finer group of individuals to have been in the trenches with these past years.

Looking ahead, while I will remain involved with BFS as a parent I have promised my successor and (perhaps more importantly) my wife and kids that come September I will stay well away. The team need to be able to get on with their jobs without me looking over their shoulders making "helpful" suggestions. You might see me pop up here-and-there in my new job, or at school events or around town, and if you do, please come over and say hello. This place has been a massive part of my life for nearly eight years and I will watch fondly how it develops over the next period.

Finally, let me urge all of you to remember what it is that has made BFS so unique and special so far: the commitment we ask everyone to make to the very highest of standards – students, families, and staff. I know that Stuart Lock is as committed to upholding this as I have been – please support him every step of the way.

Have a wonderful summer and all the very best for the future,

Mark Lehain.

Arrangements for the start of the next academic year

1 st & 4 th September	Staff training days
5 th & 6 th September	Year 7 ONLY in school for induction
7 th & 8 th September	Year 7 and Year 11 ONLY in school
11 th September	ALL students back in school, 8.25am