



BEDFORD
FREE SCHOOL

www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk

5th April 2019

Dear Parents, Carers and Pupils,

We are now at the end of week seven of what has been a very busy half term! We were very lucky to get a good break at Christmas which included three weekends and gave us a great deal solid rest, but it did also bring us back after the Christmas holidays relatively early. However, now the days are getting longer, the sun is out and spring appears to be in full swing. Pupils at Bedford Free School continue to work hard, look smart, and attend school with excellent attendance. They make us proud every day in so many different ways, some of which are detailed below.

We have had some fabulous assemblies such as Miss Raven's, focusing on equality and equity, Miss McPherson George (and several year 9, 10 and 11 girls) talking to us about women and career opportunities in STEM, and Miss Goodship, Mrs Rick and Miss Damon waking the school up each morning for a week with a fantastic singing assembly. The week before last Mr Rawlins' Science of Learning assemblies (focusing on the strategy of retrieval practice) reminded us of the utmost importance of considering how we study alongside how much we study and revise. In our daily morning address, we have reflected on the benefits of developing our character and specifically reflected on optimism, spirituality, having gratitude and being curious and creative.

Since January there have been; three more staff babies (on top of two born in Autumn Term), numerous sporting fixtures and competitions, a multitude of wonderful electives, CCF, Y11 mock exams, KS3 mid-year exams, year group progress evenings, the Y9 GCSE & Options information evening, morning meetings, DEAR and prep sessions and of course loads and loads and loads of learning in lessons. Yes it's been a very busy term! We'd like to thank you for your very high attendance to all of these events - this is what being a BFS parent is about and we are very grateful that you play your role so well.

We do have two additional really important letters from Mr Lock and Mr Blake attached to this one that are important that you read. They outline how BFS and Advantage Schools are setting themselves up to become a leading Trust well into the future. Please do have a look at these when you are finished with this newsletter.

UK wide Genetic Engineering Challenge

Pupils from our 'Women in STEM' (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) elective recently entered "Aspire to Engineer: The Genetic Engineering Challenge", a UK wide school challenge, and magnificently came second. The competition invited pupils to submit an original

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presentation, address questions such as ‘How can genetic engineering change the world in the future?’ On announcing the winners, the judges said “Bedford Free School’s courtroom drama video was an innovative and inspired approach to the competition. The team captured the judges’ attention by highlighting the ethical implications around genetic engineering by using role-play to act out real life case studies.” The prize is a video call with Kathy Niakan, named as one of the 100 most influential people in the world by Time Magazine in April 2016. She was also the first scientist in the world to gain regulatory approval to edit the genomes of human embryos for research using CRISPR gene editing technology.

Head of Science Mrs McPherson-George, said “It’s been great to see such an inspirational group of young girls working so hard to promote STEM at BFS and in the community. Their enthusiasm has led to a genuine interest and confidence boost to pupils right across the school and further afield; what’s more, they are delving into current research within the disciplines of technology and genetic engineering developing a deeper understanding for its real world application.”

Maddie from year 10 says “We loved the experience as we were able to explore new areas of science. It’s made us more interested in discovering different STEM careers too, especially within genetic engineering.”

Well done to all involved!

Parent Forum

A few weeks ago a few parents kindly joined me for a parents’ forum. We discussed items including our home-school communication, travel plans and uniform. Thank you to those parents who took the time to attend. We are aware that our results, while being the best secondary school for 15 miles, can be even better. We anticipate that our results this summer – which look very, very, positive - will make us a school with an even bigger profile. However, we know there are things we can do better. We want to listen to pupils, families and staff about where they think we can improve. That was what the parent forum was about. We have had anonymous pupil and staff surveys, which we have analysed and shared back and we ask you to fill in a parent survey every progress evening.

Remember, we are eager that all parents have their say and you can also have your say by following the link to OFSTED’s Parent View:

<https://parentview.ofsted.gov.uk/login?destination=give-your-views>

Some of the issues explored in the parent forum are as follows:-

(Home-school communication - progress evening format slight change)

We discussed a few issues, of note is a point made by a parent that they would like to have the time to digest their child’s grades before they meet with teachers. As a result of that discussion we will open school earlier on progress evening for the collection of grade sheets. Grades may be collected from the canteen and beverages will be available while you sit, relax and discuss them in preparation for meeting your child’s teachers. The teachers will not be available any earlier, but for parents who want some time to prepare having looked at the grades and

discussed them with their child, we hope that this will be an improvement. Please look out for exact details regarding arrival time in the next invite to progress evening letter.

New Look website

If you haven't had a chance to look at the new website please do. It is still in development and there is a lot to do, but we think that communication is enhanced via the easier navigation. Please do give us feedback, particularly if something isn't working as it should.

(School Uniform standards)

During the parents' forum, I exhibited some knee length shorts that we propose become optional summer uniform for both genders. The reception was positive and as a result they will be available to buy from Josens very soon. We don't know how popular these will be so they will be available as 'order only', however we will ask Josens to stock one of each size so your child may try before you place your order. Another issue that was brought up with regards to uniform was consistency around expectations. As a result we will repeat with clarity what is expected in terms of PE kit (and give some time for those pupils where this has slipped). Also, at the request of parents, though we agree, we will become even more consistent about skirt length, trouser styles (school style only, no for e.g. skinny or 'jean look') and re-enforcing the 'no make-up' rule. If your child is one of those who has out-grown their skirts or trousers please make sure they are sorted in the appropriate length skirt directly after Easter.

(School travel – car drop-off)

We discussed the fact that despite signing the Home-School Agreement...

"I will only drop my child off in the designated travel plan place of Melbourne Street Carpark, (and absolutely NOT outside school)"

...and ongoing reminders in previous newsletters, a minority of parents are continuing to drop their children off in places which are dangerous and/or upsetting our neighbours. We have had contact from Farm Foods who have asked us to tell you they will be giving tickets to people who abuse their car-parking facilities and local residents have reported that people are driving onto their private road. Parents reported that a couple of parents are really putting their children and others at risk by stopping and letting their children out in Cauldwell Street. **We were only allowed to have BFS in the location it is because we have agreed a travel plan that says pupils will be dropped off in Melbourne Street.** The suggestion at the parents' forum was for Senior Leaders to speak individually to parents in order to remind them of the drop-off rules so that is what we will do.

Healthy School

Please remember that we are a healthy school and as such would not expect pupils to have items such as sweets, fizzy drink and chewing gum. Please remind your child not to buy these on their way to school. As you would expect, any found in school will be confiscated and thrown away and any repeat offenders or those who have chewing gum will be placed in a correction. The

parent section of the home school agreement states; *"I will give my child healthy food and drinks to take to school."*

Year 11

There are extensive Year 11 revision sessions happening over the Easter break. Our staff are putting these on in their own time and we know Year 11 benefit from them. We further know that those who get the strongest results attend these sessions and give their all. Please see our Facebook site, our website, or the letter that has come out to Year 11 parents for more information.

Performing Arts news

Just a couple of weeks ago many BFS pupils took place in the Bedfordshire Festival of Music, Speech and Drama. Here is a round-up of how they did:-

- Mia (Y11) in the GCSE Composition Category won **1st Place (Cup)**
- Isobel (Y10) performed beautifully in the Piano Grade 3 Category
- Caleb (Y10) and Hanniel (Y11) were awarded **1st and 2nd Place (Cup)** in the Electric Guitar Category
- Maddie (Y10) in the Acoustic Guitar Category won **1st Place (Cup)**
- Sebastian (Y7) Grade 4/5 Brass Solo Category was awarded **1st Place (Cup)**
- Megan, Zumra and Evie (all Y11) performed brilliantly in the Dramatic Solo
- Alessio and Rebecca (Y10s) also performed brilliantly with their duologue
- Keaton (Y10) performed a fantastic monologue in the Dramatic Solo
- Maisie (Y8) also performed amazingly well in her Dramatic Solo
- Sinead, Denna and Athena (all Y10) sang beautifully in Solo or Duet Singing Category
- Athena also performed in a second category (Musical Theatre Y10 and Y11) and came **2nd Place.**
- Isabelle (Y8) and Jason (Y10) entered many different piano categories. Isabelle **won her piano duet category** and incredibly got through to the **Saturday night Gala Concert.**

A huge well done for being talented and brave enough to enter and perform and congratulations to all of you. The list of your accomplishments above are incredible!

A message from Mrs Lehain - Snowdon Expeditions 2019

Last year's Snowdon Expedition with Year 7 was one of the highlights of my teaching career. The whole year group reached the top of the highest mountain in England and Wales – they showed masses of determination in doing so, not to mention a heart-warming level of care and teamwork in encouraging one another on the journey. I could not have been more proud of them when they reached the summit – and, it was a true pleasure to witness their joy at the views from the top

and their own sense of achievement. For this reason, this year, as well as repeating a full Year 7 expedition, we are also offering this amazing opportunity to Year 9 and Year 10 to join together for an additional Snowdon trip. The trip will take place on 12-14th July. Places are limited. Cost is £175. Please email me, Mrs Lehain for a letter to apply ASAP.

jlehain@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk

Return from Easter

A reminder that we break up for our Easter holidays on Friday 5th April and return to school on Tuesday 23rd April. Please remember to read Mr Lock's exciting news about the leadership of the school and the Multi-Academy Trust, Advantage Schools. That letter alongside one from Mr Blake is attached.

We hope you have a fantastic break and get to spend lots of time with your loved ones.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JHerron', followed by a small dot.

Jane Herron
Head of School

Bedford Free School – Key Dates	
23 rd April 2019	Back to School (WEEK1)
2 nd May 2019	Year 10 Progress Evening (school finishes at 3.20pm)
6 th May 2019	May Day Bank Holiday (school is closed)
9 th May 2019	Year 8 Progress Evening (school finishes at 3.20pm)
13 th May 2019	GCSE exams start
16 th May 2019	Year 7 Progress Evening (school finishes at 3.20pm)
27 th – 31 st May 2019	Half term holidays
17 th – 21 st June 2019	Year 10 Mock exams week
19 th June 2019	Y11 Leavers' dinner
24 th – 28 th June 2019	Year 10 work experience + Year 7, 8, 9 Activities Week
27 th June 2019	Year 6 transfer day
4 th July 2019	Year 10 Progress Evening (school finishes at 3.20pm)
5 th July 2019	Sports Awards evening (provisional)
10 th July 2019	Summer Showcase (provisional)
16 th July 2019	Sports Day
18th July 2019 (new date)	End of Year Celebration Assembly (more details to follow)
19 th July 2019	Last day of school
22 nd July – 5 th September 2019	Summer Holidays
2 nd and 3 rd September 2019	BFS staff training days
4 th – 6 th September 2019	Year 7 only
9 th September 2019	Back to school (Years 8-11)