



BEDFORD
FREE SCHOOL

www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk

12th June 2019

Dear Parents / Carers

It's with great pleasure that I write my first newsletter as Principal. Despite the deluge of recent rain, it's been a fantastic start to the half-term. Lessons have been really calm and focussed, and pupils are working very hard. There is also a determined atmosphere building up to the end of year examinations which will take place over the next few weeks. It's a very busy half-term and we've got much to look forward to.

I have enjoyed taking over from Mr Lock, who has moved into a bigger role across the Trust, Advantage Schools, which runs BFS and Elstow. Mr Lock is still largely based at BFS, so he will continue to have a presence around school. However, his primary role will now be to grow Advantage Schools and ensure that even more pupils can benefit from a BFS-style education.

Year 11

This week will see the end of the GCSE exam season. I've been really impressed by Y11 throughout. They have worked so hard all year, and conducted themselves impeccably. I know that the whole BFS family will have expected nothing less, but they are a real credit to us.

We are looking forward to the leavers' dinner next week to wish them well. It's sad to see them depart, but we know they will stay in touch as our alumni over the next few years and beyond, and we will remain very proud of them. We are also saying goodbyes to a number of families where the Y11 pupil is the last child to attend BFS. I want to thank you for all your support. We look forward to seeing you for results day on Thursday 22nd August.

I also want to pay particular tribute to the collection of pupil leaders, the Deputy Head Pupils, and the Head Boy (Alex Loveday) and Head Girl (Megan Radford). They represented the school professionally at all times, developing year 11 as a group of leaders. I'm really confident that this group will go out and really make their positive mark on Bedford and the world!

End of Year Examinations / Year 10 mocks and revision

Pupils in Y7, 8, 9 and 10 will shortly be sitting their formal End-of-Year examinations. Please see the timetables below. They have been thoroughly prepared, and have, I hope, taken our advice. We repeatedly turn down easy but ineffective revision techniques such as highlighting or rereading. These make pupils feel good, but cause forgetting and hence wasted time.

Techniques such as retrieval practice, interleaving and spaced practice are the best ways to revise and we use the Learning Scientists website to inform ourselves about that. I invite parents to check out the videos at <http://www.learningscientists.org/> to help. I genuinely think these scientists are the best in the world at explaining how we learn. For example, we are aware that

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retrieval practice (an example of which is flashcard revision) is hard and in the short-term feels like it doesn't work. But over a longer period of time it is shown in study after study to be more effective. Crucially, this is the case for everyone. It is not the case that people have different 'learning styles'. While they may have 'learning preferences', everyone benefits from the hard work that goes into retrieval practice. I suppose the best way to summarise this is the old adage that there "are no short-cuts" to real success. The following blog explains some of the issues around learning styles in more detail and is well worth a read: <http://www.learningscientists.org/blog/2019/6/6-1>

It is important that pupils come fully equipped to each exam. They are expected to write in black ink and it is good to have a number of extra pens just in case. For some exams they will need specific equipment such a geometry kit and scientific calculator, this is especially relevant for maths and science exams. Please ensure your son or daughter is fully prepared. We encourage pupils to pack their bags the night before each exam and check they have everything they need before they leave the house.

Year 10 Mock Week Beginning 17th June 2019

MM	Mon 17 th	Tues 18 th	Wed 19 th	Thurs 20 th	Fri 21 st
1	English Language	Maths 1 (Non-calculator)	MFL French & Spanish (Writing) ----- Spanish (Listening)	Option H French Geography History Spanish (Reading) Tech	Geography 2
2					
Break					
3	Science 1 (T: Biology Paper 1 C: Biology Paper 1)	Science 2 (T: Chemistry Paper 1 C: Chemistry Paper1)	Maths 2 (Calculator)	Science 3 (T: Physics Paper 1 C: Physics Paper 1)	Maths 3 (Calculator)
4					
Lunch					
5	Option G Drama French (Reading & Listening) Geography Music Tech Support – No Exam	Option E Art Computing Geography History	English Literature	Option F Art (No Exam) PE RE Spanish (Reading) Support – No Exam	History 2
6					
Prep	Revision	Revision		Revision	N/A

KS3 End of Year Exams Week Beginning 24th-28th June 2019

MM	Mon 24 th	Tues 25 th	Wed 26 th	Thurs 27 th	Fri 28 th
	(YEAR 8 EXAMS)			(YEAR 7 EXAMS)	(YEAR 9 EXAMS)
1	English	<i>Activities week</i>	<i>Activities week</i>	English	English
2					
Break					
3	Maths	<i>Activities week</i>	<i>Activities week</i>	Maths	Maths
4					
Lunch					
5	Science	<i>Activities week</i>	<i>Activities week</i>	Science	Science
6					
Prep					

Year 10 Progress Evening (Thursday 4th July)

A reminder to all parents of Year 10 pupils to put aside the evening of Thursday 4th July to attend school with your son/daughter in order to receive their mock results and find out how they are doing in their GCSE studies. Pupils will receive vital advice and feedback following their mock examinations alongside work to complete over the summer. Y10 pupils will be given their appointment sheets shortly and are expected to make appointments with their each of their respective teachers. Parents have mooted to us that sometimes appointments can get out of sync during progress evening, as such, we ask that you play your part in helping us keep to time by being mindful of the fact that appointments are allocated for 5 minutes per family. School will finish at 3.20pm.

Corrections pilot

We hold extremely high expectations of our pupils so we're always looking at ways to raise standards, enhance our strong culture and make our routines even smoother. It must be acknowledged that the vast majority of pupils display extremely positive attitudes towards their studies, which includes the completion of homework, and exemplary conduct in and outside of lessons each and every day. However, a very small minority of pupils are routinely and habitually using extended prep as a way to undertake homework which should have been completed well in advance and at home. In addition to this, we also want to create an opportunity for pupils to reflect on any behaviour which leads to a correction. For these reasons we've decided to run a pilot for the last three weeks of term.

During the pilot, pupils who do not complete homework on time or to the correct standard will be issued with a correction. In the correction, pupils will be asked to review the code of conduct and undertake a reflection sheet. Pupils will not be allowed to complete any outstanding work or homework during this time, and the reflection sheet will be extensive. We hope this will give pupils a better understanding of the effect their behaviour has on their academic success as well as give them time to think about how to avoid any repeat of this behaviour. The pilot will enable us to refine our systems and gather feedback from staff and pupils before potentially rolling it out fully from September. As always we welcome feedback from parents – please do let us know what you think by email. My PA, Mrs Logan, can be reached on elogan@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk.

Options and Preferences

Mr Moore has been working away at the timetable for next academic year and we will be informing Year 9 pupils about their options choices and Year 8 pupils about their preferences very soon.

PSHE

Traditionally, we have delivered PSHE through assemblies and during activities week. However, we felt that in doing so, this was not providing pupils with the full range of information and guidance that they truly need. From September, our PSHE provision will be more strategic and robust to ensure that pupils receive even more regular input on a number of vital topics. Mrs Sharma is going to oversee the PSHE curriculum and we are really excited by her ideas. The overview will be placed on the school website at the start of the next academic year. If anyone requires any further information about the programme, please contact Mrs Foley: efoley@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk

Performing Arts

We are very proud of Denna Jomon in Y9, who was nominated by 'British Malayali' for the Young Talent Award 2019. Denna was up against 5 other performers and sang 'Kaathodu Kaathorum' in Malayalam. The public then voted over a 6 week period and Denna came first place with a massive 15,000 votes. Huge congratulation to Denna, we are very proud of you.

Measles information

All local schools have been asked by the Bedford, Luton & Milton Keynes Immunisation and Vaccination Team to share an information leaflet about measles with parents. You will find the relevant poster attached.

Uniform & Equipment list

A reminder of the uniform and equipment list that pupils are expected to have every day at BFS. We reinforce this list daily, issuing corrections if pupils are not fully equipped. You can find a copy of the equipment list attached and also on our website:

<https://www.bedfordreeschool.co.uk/school-uniform-equipment/>

At a recent parent forum, our PE kit was brought up and it was requested to see if other warm items of clothing could be added, aside from the rugby shirt. In consultation with the school sports council, two items have been added. A warm top (with fleece lining) and tracksuit bottoms – both with embroidered BFS logo. These items are available (as with all of our PE kit and uniform) from Josens. Both items are optional, however please be aware that from September, all PE kit worn should be standard BFS kit from our school supplier. All pupils have now seen examples of the new additional layers during assemblies last week as modelled by one of our excellent Y10 student leaders, Noah West.

Activities week (W/c 24th June)

Every year, when year 10's go on work experience, we hold our annual 'Activities week' for the rest of the school. This is where we collapse our normal timetable in order to provide a wide range of additional enhancing educational experiences that we can't normally offer during term time. As you will be aware, this year we have expanded our enrichment provision and as a result we have got some hugely exciting activities on offer for our pupils. Attendance remains compulsory during activities week. We know pupils will really enjoy as well as benefit from these experiences.

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
Monday 24 th June	Shakespeare day	Exams	Options trip: National Gallery Imperial War museum Europa centre for languages
Tuesday 25 th June	Enabling enterprise	Art trip – portrait gallery	Faith tour
Wednesday 26 th June	Faith tour	Either Camping or Interhouse	Options trip: Computing museum Cambridge World of packaging tour Cambridge science trip
Thursday 27 th June	Exams	Either Camping or canoe trail day	Options trip: Paxton pits Natural history museum
Friday 28 th June	Snowdon	Either Camping or Shakespeare day	Exams

Year 10 Work experience

We wish Y10 well with work experience during the week beginning 24th June. I know they will find this a very valuable opportunity and will make families and the school very proud.

End of year assembly

Our annual end of year celebration assembly will take place on **Thursday 18th July** in the Great Hall at Bedford School. The event will start at 1.30pm and finish at approximately 3pm. This new venue has a much greater capacity so we have plenty of space if parents wish to attend. Should you wish to attend, please obtain a ticket in advance by emailing info@bedfordreeschool.co.uk.

Parent Forum

I have reserved 6pm on Monday 15th July 2019 for a Parents Forum. This is an opportunity for us to gather feedback from you on the school. If you would like to join, please would you let us know in advance by emailing elogan@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk. If there is anything you would like to see included on an agenda please could you mention that in your email too. This is not for individual queries about individual pupils – we are happy to meet you separately over any concerns. It is for matters of policy and procedure. We are interested in what you value that we do, and what you believe we can do better. It would be great to see as many parents there as possible.

Attendance

Attendance at BFS is the highest it has ever been. This is down to families working with the school in a clear and constructive partnership. We continue to encourage you to send your children to school if you are 'not sure'. We will send them home if they get worse. The correlation between attendance and the outcomes – bluntly their life-chances – is so strong that this is one of the best things parents can do (along with attending parents' evenings and the like). Please do keep us informed and use me as the reason if you like. For example, "you might have a bit of a headache, but I'm sending you in while we see if it goes – blame Mr Blake as he has said you have to!"

Obviously, you know your children best, and if they are genuinely and definitely ill we do want them to recover properly at home. We will insist they attend interventions and catch up with work they miss, as you would expect of BFS.

Last day of term

Please be aware that the last day of term is Friday 19th July. We will be finishing at the slightly earlier time of 2pm. We hope this advanced warning will give families plenty of time to make alternative arrangements. However, if this causes your family any difficulty please email Mrs Logan and we will endeavour to make arrangements for your child.

I will write to you again at the end of term to update you on plans for September. In the meantime, if there is anything you wish to raise with my colleagues or myself, please do not hesitate to get in touch. In particular, if you would like to look round the school at any time, please let us know – we love showing our families around.

The remainder of this letter contains term dates.

With very best wishes,



Tim Blake
Principal

Bedford Free School - Key Dates	
17 th - 21 st June 2019	Year 10 Mock exams week + Year 7-9 non-core exams
19 th June 2019	Y11 Leavers' dinner
24 th - 28 th June 2019	Year 10 work experience + Year 7, 8, 9 Activities Week + core subject exams
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 (confirmed - by invitation only))
10 th July 2019	Summer Showcase (confirmed)
15 th July 2019	Parent Forum
16 th July 2019	Sports Day (Bedford Athletics Stadium - more information to follow)
18th July 2019 (date change)	End of Year Celebration Assembly, The Great Hall, Bedford School
19 th July 2019	Last day of school (early closure)
22 nd July - 5 th September 2019	Summer Holidays
New Academic Year - 2019-2020	
2 nd and 3 rd September 2019	BFS Staff training days
4 th - 6 th September 2019	New Year 7 only
9 th September 2019	All pupils back to school

Please note that all dates are subject to change/added to and we will notify you as soon as any changes are made.