



18th July 2019

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Dear Parents / Carers & Pupils

As we approach the end of term, the last of the academic year, I'm delighted to write to you with our latest newsletter, updating you on some of the activities and things that have gone on over the last half-term and some of the changes for September.

The end of the summer term is always a slightly funny period. It's the time of year when we say goodbye to Year 11 pupils and staff who are moving on, but it's also an exciting time planning ahead for the autumn term, and all the new pupils and staff that will join in September.

Staff changes

We are saying goodbye to a small number of staff, who we are grateful for their hard work and contribution to our success:

- Mrs Kirby – English
- Mr Wallwork – Science
- Mr Ogbeifun – Maths
- Miss Raven - Maths
- Mrs Heitzmann – MFL
- Mr Carbonero - PE

We have also made the following appointments and are looking forward to the following colleagues joining us in September:

- Mr Hill – Teacher of Science
- Miss Slaughter – Teacher of Art (maternity cover)
- Miss Bell – Director of maths (working across Advantage Schools)
- Mrs Priddle – Teacher of MFL
- Mr Bryning – Teacher of Maths
- Miss Walker – Teacher of Science
- Miss Webster – Teacher of English
- Mr Davies – PE Technician

It is worth noting that the school has invested in teaching staff in order that we can ensure that we protect subject-specialism. We believe that our teachers should be highly knowledgeable about their subject.

Changes to the school day

Time is our most precious and scarcest resource. For a while we have been keen to increase the amount of time for options subjects as well as reboot our enrichment entitlement. The big

T: 01234 332299 E: info@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk Bedford Free School, 12-16 Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AD

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challenge has been how to do this without reducing our Key Stage 3 (years 7-9) offer or compromise the rest of the school day. Following a consultation with staff we agreed there was a compelling case to make additional time available. We also sought feedback from colleagues about how we might be able to make it happen. Over the past couple of months the Senior Leadership Team have carefully considered a range of proposals and I'm confident the changes planned will allow us to work on our key curriculum priorities and improve the enrichment entitlement for pupils as well as retain the key ingredients that make this such a successful and special school.

Please see below for a detailed breakdown of the school day from September:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday	Wednesday	Friday
8.25am Morning line up	8.25am Morning line up	08.25am Morning line up
8.30am Morning Meeting	8.30am P1	08.30am Morning Meeting
9.00am Period 1	9.20am P2	09.00am P1
9.50am Period 2	10.10am P3	09.50am P2
10.40am Break	11.00am Break	10.40am Break
10.58am End of break time. Line Up	11.20am P4	11.00am P3
11.00am Period 3	12.10pm P5	11.50am P4
11.50am Period 4	13.00pm 1st Lunch and DEAR 1	12.40pm 1st Lunch and DEAR 1
12.40pm 1st Lunch and DEAR 1	13.30pm 2nd Lunch and DEAR 2	13.10pm 2nd Lunch and DEAR 2
13.10pm 2nd Lunch and DEAR 2	14.00pm P6 Electives / Catch Up	13.40pm P5
13.40pm Period 5	15.30pm Tutor time	14.30pm P6
14.30pm Period 6	16.00pm School day ends. Corrections start	15.20pm Golden time / Catch Up / Loss of Golden time
15.20pm Prep		16.00pm School day ends. Corrections start
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Electives:

From September will be having one long elective session per week, which will now take place on Wednesday afternoon. This will be a much longer session than we have currently and will last for one and a half hours. We know teachers and pupils of sporting electives or activities which have required transport will greatly appreciate the additional time. By investing more time in a single session it will result in a much better experience overall for all our pupils. It also gives us an opportunity to increase the quality and rigour of our electives. Mr Cox, who oversees the electives, has already started to review our current offer and will look to create even better experiences and further opportunities for accreditation and certification though the electives programme.

Pupils will also change electives more frequently. Choosing a new elective each half-term will enable them to have a much broader choice of enrichment opportunities over the course of their time at BFS. In order to accommodate the longer elective and a short period of structured form before the end of the day, Wednesday will have a special altered timetable.

We firmly believe that pupils should have access to a wide range of experiences. Therefore we will continue to offer a range of high-quality enrichment opportunities which include a rich programme of sports alongside leadership and community-based service. We have made every possible plan to ensure that while we are reducing the quantity of electives, this will lead to an enhancement in the quality and rigour of our enrichment curriculum.

Additional time for subjects / GCSE Options:

These changes also allow us to allocate additional time to some subjects at KS3 and all GCSE Options subjects in Y10 and Y11. Options subjects will gain an additional lesson over the course of two weeks, bringing the total lessons to 7 per fortnight. This has been something we've been keen to do for a while as we have comparatively fewer hours allocated to options subjects than many other schools. This will ensure we can continue to achieve great academic outcomes for our pupils.

Golden Time / Prep on Friday

Friday will return to mirror the structure of a normal school day. However, Golden Time / Catch up will now take the place of what would have been prep. It will also begin slightly later at 15:20 (currently 15:15) this means all pupils who have met our high expectations will still be able to leave school from this point. The school day will still finish at 4pm with Golden Time, Catch up and Corrections running up till this time. Leaving early for Golden Time will continue to be a privilege to be earned and is not automatic.

Sports:

It's been another great year of sport at BFS. We have undertaken 180 school fixtures this year, and as you will have read about throughout the year, we have won even more competitions than ever before.

95% of our pupils in Y7-Y10 have been involved in a fixture or extra-curricular sports clubs. This is up from 92% last year. An amazing 33% of our pupils were also involved in Sports Leaders over the course of this year. Both figures are truly inspiring and pupils should be rightly proud of all that they have achieved. In recognition of this we've once again been awarded the Sainsbury's Gold School Games Mark.

We have a huge array of different opportunities available to all pupils through PE lessons, electives, fixtures and activities week. I am very proud of our pupils and staff, and this couldn't have been better exemplified than our Sports Day at the stadium. The conduct of our pupils was first class. Their competitive spirit, support for one another, and determination was excellent. And we did this by using some of the facilities Bedford has to offer. Well done to Cardington Dolphins, who despite some very stiff competition, managed to retain the title of champions of Sports Day.

Collection of GCSE results:

A reminder for parents and pupils in Y11 that GCSE results will be available to collect from 10am – 12pm on the 22nd August. My colleagues and I will be present to help with college queries or advice, and we will do everything possible to ensure that their transition to college or sixth form is successful.

DANS

Since September 2015, Bedford Free School has been participating in the RELAY Scheme in partnership with Bedford Borough Council and Bedfordshire Police. The scheme is changing name and is now called the Domestic Abuse Notification Scheme (D.A.N.S). The D.A.N.S acts as a school notification service where incidents of domestic abuse have been reported in the previous 24 hours to Bedfordshire Police from households where children reside and are on the school roll.

If you would like more information about the scheme or support that can be offered around Domestic Abuse please read the attached letter or speak with Mrs Herron, Miss Foley or your child's Pastoral Lead.

Police letter:

Please also find attached a letter from Bedfordshire Police sent to all schools locally. It is in response to an increase in cases of robbery recently and it contains important advice about how pupils can keep themselves safe.

Uniform & Equipment list

A reminder that all pupils should be in full school uniform in September. We are very proud of our pupils' appearance. Parents who attended the most recent Parents' Forum were insistent that this is one of the key features of the school and one of the things which makes our pupils distinct from other schools. I am often preoccupied with maintaining our high standards and not accepting any drift in standards. It is my experience that if you accept a small deviation from the uniform, this can become 'normal' and accepted, and then other deviations start to become acceptable – which in turn can affect behaviour. In a previous newsletter, I have reminded pupils and parents about uniform requirements and expectations, but you can find a copy of the equipment list attached and also on our website: <https://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/school-uniform-equipment/>.

From September, all PE kit worn should be standard BFS kit from our school supplier. This includes the new optional additional layers- a warm top (with fleece lining) and tracksuit bottoms. These items are available (as with all of our PE kit and uniform) from Josens.

Please ensure your child has all of the correct equipment and uniform ready for September. Many of our pupils have grown over the last couple of months and will need new items of uniform. From the very start of the academic year we will be having a renewed focus on uniform standards so please ensure your child is properly and fully equipped. As always we will reinforce uniform and equipment expectations daily, issuing corrections if pupils are not fully equipped.

Options and Preferences

All year 8 pupils have been allocated their chosen preference subjects. The vast majority of year 9 pupils were also allocated their requested choice of GCSE options. If we were not able to do so then we have been in touch to make alternative choices. As such the academic timetable is now ready for September.

Parents' Forum

Thank you to all parents who attended the Parents' Forum on Monday. We always want to be a school that is as good as it can be. Therefore we are always looking for ways to adapt and improve. We want our pupils to have great outcomes, and we want them to become great people. We want to provide the best possible education for our families and the community we serve and ensure BFS remains the first choice for families in the local area. The Parents' Forum is one of the ways we collect vital feedback and help improve key aspects of the school, how it is run and the way we communicate. It gives parents a genuine voice at the heart of our school community. I want to thank the parents who attended for their useful and constructive feedback. We will be holding further meetings in the new academic year, details of which and updates from our most recent meeting will be in first newsletter out in September.

Head Boy and Head Girl

I'd like to say congratulations to our new Head Girl and Head Boy, Athena and John. I look forward to working with them and the student leaders next term.

Last day of term

A reminder that the last day of term is this Friday, 19th July. As mentioned in the previous newsletter we will be finishing at the slightly earlier time of 2pm. If this causes your family any difficulty please email Mrs Logan and we will endeavour to make arrangements for your child.

The start to the autumn term

A quick reminder of the arrangements for the start of the new academic year:

- Staff training days: Monday 2nd & Tuesday 3rd September
- New Year 7: start on Wednesday 4th September
- Reward Trip to Thorpe Park: Friday 6th September
- All other pupils return & lessons start as usual: Monday 9th September

IT Service change / School communication

We are changing our IT service provider which will, in the long run, give us a much better quality of service and more control over our IT provision. We have planned this change to take place at the start of the summer holiday to minimise any disruption to the smooth running of the school. As you can imagine, the change itself is complicated and fraught with logistical challenges. We anticipate a significant period of disruption as new IT provider builds our own servers onsite and constructs the necessary IT infrastructure. We've been informed that this could be up to three weeks but we're hoping to get essential services up and running relatively quickly within the first couple of weeks. Please be aware that during this period we won't be able to communicate via email. We have a small number of admin and support staff onsite throughout the summer and phones will remain unaffected.

Thank you

It is often unnoticed, but the work of Governors and Trustees is voluntary and carries significant responsibility. Governors and Trustees put in countless hours and have significant legal responsibility for the running of the school. The governors at BFS are the finest I have come across in my time in education. I am regularly very heavily challenged by them to ensure that BFS is the best it possibly can be. I want to thank the Governing Body, and the Trustees of Advantage Schools, for being so brilliant.

Finally, I want to say thank you to parents, carers, family members and the community for the incredible support you have shown us as we educate your young people. It has been my privilege to witness significant progress over the term, and share in the successes of our pupils. They have worked really hard over this term. I know Y10 will have some studying to do over the holiday period, but when it arrives I also hope that you have some time to spend with loved ones and on hobbies, and that you have a really enjoyable and restful summer holiday.

With very best wishes,



Tim Blake
Principal

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

Bedford Free School - Key Dates	
New Academic Year - 2019-2020 (Autumn term)	
2 nd and 3 rd September 2019	BFS Staff training days
4 th – 6 th September 2019	New Year 7 only
6 th September 2019	Rewards trip
9 th September 2019	All pupils back to school
19 th September 2019	Open Evening 17:30-20:30 (early finish)
28 th September 2019	Saturday Open Morning 10:00-12:00
30 th September 2019	BFS Staff training day
3 rd October 2019	Parent information evenings: Y7 Meet the tutor evening, Welcome to Y10, Getting the most out of Y11
21 st -25 th October 2019	HALF TERM
30 th October-1 st November 2019	Y11 Geography Fieldtrip
11 th -15 th November 2019	Y11 Mock exams
14 th November 2019	GCSE Awards Evening
28 th November 2019	Y11 Progress Evening & Next Steps Event (early finish)
9 th – 13 th December 2019	Y10 assessment week / KS3 Revision week
19 th December 2019	Christmas lunch
20 th December 2019	Christmas Assembly, St Pauls Church
23 rd December 2019 – 4 th January 2020	<i>Christmas holiday</i>
6 th January 2020	BFS Staff training day