

19th October 2021

Dear Parents / Carers & Pupils

A very warm welcome for this academic year. September and most of October have already flown by and we are almost at the end of our half first term. Lessons have been phenomenal and pupils are once again working hard, learning lots and enhancing their knowledge every single day. I know that pupils have begun the year determined to do everything possible to maximise their learning and ensure their future success. It's also been a joy to see pupils participating in enrichment opportunities once again. Electives, sports fixtures, musical performances and rehearsals for the school show are now all under way. It's an exciting time at BFS!

It has also been brilliant to welcome our new cohort of Year 7 pupils as the 'Class of 2026' into our school community, and start to get to know their families. They have begun life at BFS so very well, and have taken to our routines and expectations superbly.

COVID-19

Thank you for continuing to play an important role in keeping the whole school community safe. It remains the case that anyone who has coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms or who has tested positive must not attend school.

If your child develops any of the following symptoms:

- A high temperature – this means feeling hot to touch on the chest or back
- A new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours
- A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

You must notify the school immediately (please follow the usual absence reporting system by ringing reception by 8:15am) and arrange a PCR test by visiting <https://www.nhs.uk/ask-for-a-coronavirus-test> or by phoning 119. If your child has symptoms you should book a PCR test and notify the school of the result of the test by emailing covid@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk. If the test comes back negative, pupils can return to school once they are well.

Please note that if a pupil or member of staff develops symptoms of COVID-19 whilst at school, the individual concerned will be sent home. Families will be asked to arrange a PCR test for their child and to share the results with us by emailing covid@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk.

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

RESPECT • HONESTY • HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Testing continues to be an important way to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Therefore, staff and pupils should continue to test twice-weekly using the home test kits provided.

If you have not previously provided consent for your child in relation to testing but would now like to take up home testing please contact Ms Haskins (shaskins@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk).

Pupils should continue to test over half-term and preferably take an LFD test the night before they return to school after the break.

The Secretary of State for Education and the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care have written a joint letter to parents about the vaccination of children aged 12 to 15 and the importance of continuing with twice-weekly COVID-19 testing and reporting. A copy of this letter is attached.

Curriculum:

Our curriculum, like everything at Bedford Free School, is guided by our values of respect, honesty and high expectations. This means we hold dear the belief that every single child and young person at our school is capable of achieving extraordinary things. We are very proud of our knowledge-rich curriculum which ensures all pupils leave us knowing lots, with great outcomes and doors are wide open for pupils to eventually attend the best universities in the country.

We will keep our curriculum map updated and a live version can be found on our website here: <https://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/academic-curriculum/>

We hope this information will be useful for parents and aid them in supporting their child with their studies at home.

Homework

The homework timetable for this year can be found on our website: [BFS HW timetable](#)

We expect homework to be started in prep and finished as required every night, ready for lessons the following day. For some year 7s, this means their homework may be completed when they arrive home. In older years, pupils will have much more extensive homework to complete. I would like to remind parents and pupils that there is always self-quizzing, further revision and reading that can be conducted in order to commit learning into long-term memory.

PSHE and Careers:

The academic curriculum at BFS is further supplemented with a comprehensive and coherent PSHE and careers program.

Our PSHE curriculum is delivered throughout the year, utilising some lesson time, assemblies and prep sessions. Across their 5 years at Bedford Free School, pupils will develop their understanding of various different themes and topics including respectful relationships and friendships, physical and mental wellbeing, internet safety, keeping safe and the law and maintaining good health. Our PSHE provision also includes RSHE (Relationships, Sex and Health Education). For further information including our updated PSHE and RSHE overview please visit: <https://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/pshe/>

In addition, access to high quality careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEAIG) is an entitlement for all our pupils. We want to ensure that our pupils understand the opportunities available to them so that they can take ownership of their own career plan. Pupils will be able to make informed decisions about the appropriate pathway for them, which supports their interests and abilities, and will help them to follow a career path and sustain employability throughout their working lives. We employ a well-qualified independent careers advisor so by the end of Year 11, every pupil will have received impartial careers advice. Pupils will know what opportunities are available to them Post 16, including information about technical education qualifications and apprenticeship opportunities. This will allow pupils to focus on their career aspirations, and ensure their career pathway beyond Year 11 is right for them.

Further information can be found here: <http://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/careers-curriculum/>

If you require any further information about our PSHE or Careers programmes, please contact Mrs Foley: efoley@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk

Calendar & training days

Please find attached to this newsletter a copy of the calendar for the year. I would like to emphasise the following training days:

- Monday 1st November 2021 (first day back after October half-term)
- Tuesday 4th January 2022

The school will be closed to pupils so that all BFS staff can participate in professional learning and dedicated staff training.

Consideration for our neighbours:

A reminder that our designated drop-off and pick-up point according to our travel plan is Melbourne Street carpark. As always, colleagues at BFS will go the extra mile to supervise the crossings and ensure that pupils are safe. As outlined in the home-school agreement please do not drop off outside BFS or on any other side-streets, at Bedford College or Farm Foods - it may not feel like it is a problem because it is 'just you' but this quickly becomes inconvenient and inconsiderate to our neighbours - many of whom have asked me to issue this reminder - and we ask that all parents and carers model this consideration for others to our pupils.

Uniform and equipment:

Thank you for sending your child/children back to school looking so smart and ensuring that they are fully equipped. This helps to maintain standards and of course aids efficient learning as pupils have all they need to get on with their lessons. Just in case you need it throughout the school year our uniform and equipment list can be found on our website: [School uniform and equipment list 2021](#)

A reminder that all skirts should be: **knee length** and selected styles only from school supplier. Further information about the different styles can be found as part of the equipment list on our website.

As part of keeping everyone safe we are required to keep more windows open than we normally would at this time of year, this is to ensure adequate ventilation. We will be monitoring the situation carefully but as the weather gets colder, if desired, pupils can wear layers or thermals that can't be seen (so low collar lines), under their shirts in order to keep themselves warm.

As autumn turns to winter and the weather gets colder and wetter it's really important all pupils have a suitable school coat. Please be aware that hoodies are not permitted.

Pastoral care & guidance:

Sometimes young people need an increased level of advice or support. Every pupil at BFS has a form tutor who is their first point of contact for any questions or concerns. We also have a fantastic and dedicated team of pastoral leaders who oversee pastoral support and guidance for each year group.

Pupils also have additional opportunities to discuss their health and wellbeing. We have a school counsellor and school nurse who come into BFS each week. If you have any worries or concerns about your child, we would encourage you to contact your child's pastoral leader, details below:

Y7: Mrs Runnegar-Clark

Y8 & Y9: Ms Costin-Webb

Y10 & Y11: Ms Robinson

Healthy School:

Please remember that we are a healthy school and as such would not expect pupils to have items such as sweets and fizzy drinks. Chewing gum is prohibited. We also discourage large packets of crisps or biscuits. 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.

Bedford Borough Half-term activities:

Bedford Borough council is funding a range of free face to face and online child care activities across October Half-Term for children eligible for income related free school meals, Children Looked After by Bedford Borough and those with no recourse to public funds. Please see the flyer attached and further information can be found on the council's [website](#).

Governance:

We are recruiting for two parent governors to join the BFS Local Governing Body. It is often unnoticed, but the work of Governors is very important, it is voluntary and carries significant responsibility. They play an important role in holding leaders to account and ensuring that BFS is the best it possibly can be. We have emailed a letter and application form to families. Please email Sophie Heron, Clerk to the Local Governing Body at sheron@advantageschools.co.uk to find out more information or to express an interest in joining the Local Governing Body.

Thank you:

Finally, I want to thank you for your continued support and everything you have been doing to support your child/children. Pupils have worked really hard over this half-term. I know Year 11 will have lots of studying to do over the half-term holiday in preparation for their mock exams but I also hope that you have some time to spend together and have a restful holiday.

As always, if you have concerns, something you'd like to discuss, or any comments, we always listen. Please email info@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk and I will read every comment, and where necessary reply or arrange contact to discuss with you. We take your views seriously.

With very best wishes,



Tim Blake
Principal

(Please see below our key dates)

Bedford Free School – Key Dates 2021-2022	
Autumn Term	
<i>25th – 29th October 2021</i>	<i>HALF TERM</i>
1st November 2021	<i>Staff (Trust) training day (school closed for pupils)</i>
2 nd November 2021	Pupils back to school
2 nd December 2021	Y11 Progress Evening & Next Steps Event
16 th December 2021 (provisional)	Christmas Lunch
17 th December 2021 (provisional)	Christmas Assembly
<i>20th December 2020 – 4th January 2021</i>	<i>CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS</i>
Spring Term	
<i>3rd January 2022</i>	<i>Bank Holiday (School is closed)</i>
4th January 2022	<i>School closed – staff training day (school closed for pupils)</i>
5 th January 2022	Pupils back to school
6 th January 2022	Year 10 Progress Evening
27 th January 2022	Year 9 Progress Evening
3 rd February 2022	Year 8 Progress Evening
10 th February 2022	Year 7 Progress Evening
<i>14th – 18th February 2022</i>	<i>HALF TERM</i>
21 st – 25 th February 2022	Year 11 Mock Exams
10 th March 2022	Y11 Progress Evening
17 th March 2022	Year 9 GCSE & Options Evening
<i>4th April – 18th April 2022</i>	<i>EASTER HOLIDAYS</i>
Summer term	
19 th April 2022	Pupils back to school
21 st April 2022	Year 7 Progress Evening
<i>2nd May 2022</i>	<i>BANK HOLIDAY (School is closed)</i>
5 th May 2022	Year 10 Progress Evening
12 th May 2022	Year 8 Progress Evening
<i>30th May – 3rd June 2022</i>	<i>HALF TERM</i>
6 th June 2022	Pupils back to school
20 th June – 24 th June 2022	Year 10 Mock Exams
4 th July – 8 th July 2022	Activities Week/Year 10 Work Experience
14 th July 2022	Year 10 Progress Evening
18 th July 2022	Sports Day
22 nd July 2022	BFS End of Year Assembly
<i>25th July – xx September 2022</i>	<i>SUMMER HOLIDAYS</i>

Please note that all dates are subject to change/be added to/cancelled as we monitor and follow current guidelines. We will notify you as soon as any changes are made.