



BEDFORD  
FREE SCHOOL

[www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk](http://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk)

15<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Dear Parents / Carers & Pupils,

It's been a fantastic half-term. Lessons have been calm and focussed, and pupils have been working hard. Year 11 have successfully undertaken their first set of mock exams and received valuable feedback from teachers during their virtual progress evening, which was exceptionally well attended by parents and pupils.

During our weekly themes we have already reflected on our school values and discussed the different strands of the BFS mountain rope, character traits such as; resilience, gratitude, enthusiasm and self-control. Pupils have responded thoughtfully to these themes as we have discussed them each week.

#### **Enrichment:**

The school has once again been full of life with lots of enrichment opportunities including a wide range of competitive Sports Fixtures and exciting electives. Last week we also hosted the author Seth Burkett. He was the first English footballer to play professionally in Brazil, he has also played professionally in Sri Lanka. He is the author of Tekkers, the book we used for our inter house competition during lockdown. Some of our Year 7 boys have also been reading his book as part of their elective. He spoke to lots of different pupils during the course of the day, inspiring them with his experiences.

The BFS team for the English-Speaking Union Churchill competition, consisting of, Roma, Sophie and Riya in Year 11 triumphed against some stiff competition. By winning this round they are now through to the next stage of the tournament which will take place at Bedford School in January. Thank you to Mr Scanlan for supporting them and a huge congratulations to the team!

A big thank you to Miss Merola (and the English Department) for organising 'Book buzz', which meant every Year 7 pupil got to choose a brand-new book for themselves to keep. There were a wide range of colourful and exciting modern titles from which to choose.

A number of pupils recently went to Oxford as part of the Wadham College Project to experience university life. Mr Cox also took the winners of 'Aspire to Engineer: The Renewable Challenge' on a reward visit to the Natural History and Science Museum in London. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed the trip and it was a great experience for them. Mr Colbourne oversaw a virtual training and induction session for our healthy lifestyle champions.

#### **Christmas in a Box:**

I was overwhelmed by the generosity shown for this year's 'Christmas in a box'. I've included a few photos below from the collection last Tuesday. Thank you to everyone involved and for your incredibly generous donations. The need in our local community will continue to be exceptionally

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**RESPECT • HONESTY • HIGH EXPECTATIONS**

high this year and these gestures of generosity shown by our pupils and their families were deeply touching. They will make a huge difference to those who receive it over Christmas. What better way to embody our core values and demonstrate the qualities we've been discussing as part of the BFS Mountain Rope than to give back to our community. I'm really proud of our pupils, families and colleagues, for getting behind this great cause.



### **Christmas Card Competition**

The Art department was delighted by the quality and quantity of entries for this year's Christmas card competition. As always, the standard was exceptionally high and this made choosing the winners even more difficult. You can find pictures of the runners-up and the winners below. Congratulations to everyone who took part.

#### ***Runners-up:***



Amrit C  
8CW



Samiyah  
11MB



Goncalo R  
9MB

#### ***Winners:***



Priya  
10MB



Rebecca  
10JB

#### **House Cup:**

The latest house point totals are below, the gaps between the houses are still relatively small, especially given the remaining house competitions before the end of term. Pupils earn house points for going the extra mile and displaying the qualities and characteristics of the BFS mountain rope.

Beaufort – 16558  
Bunyan – 12403  
Howard – 15848  
Wells - 14722

### **Online Safety and use of Social Media:**

In our modern world social media can be a wonderful addition to our lives but if used inappropriately it can be harmful to pupils' well-being, place them at risk and can have serious consequences. You may be aware of a recent craze which involves pupils posting inappropriate videos on TikTok which target schools and teachers. It has been reported in the news that some of these types of video posts are in clear contravention of TikTok's own community guidelines and can in some cases comprise of hate speech, bullying, harassment and illegal behaviour.

Whilst this appears to be a wider national issue, I am sad and disappointed to report that BFS has not been immune and deeply concerned that members of our school family and community are being targeted and abused online.

As you are aware we have extremely high expectations of our pupils, their behaviour and conduct including online. Our home-school agreement which pupils and families have signed states:

#### Home school agreement

- *I will conduct myself in line with the school values whilst in and out of school*
- *I will always treat everyone at BFS with respect*
- *I am responsible for my own behaviour*

#### Pupil code of conduct

- *Following the school values of Respect, Honesty and High Expectations AT ALL TIMES*
- *Remembering I am always an ambassador for BFS including within any online activity*

As you would expect we will not tolerate or accept this behaviour and I need to be really clear that we take incidents such as these extremely seriously. We will sanction pupils accordingly for their behaviour. In the most serious cases this could mean up to and including a permanent exclusion. We will also report incidents to the police for further investigation.

With advancing technologies and ever evolving and new social media apps parents may find it difficult to carefully monitor their children's online activity, however I would urge you to take every measure to carefully do so. Inappropriate online activity can be most hurtful and highly harmful to other people and may also leave your own child very vulnerable. Whilst school will continue to monitor social media and take the necessary action to address this, I hope we can work in partnership to ensure we send a clear message that this behaviour will not be tolerated.

The UK Safer Internet Centre have created four top tips for parents and carers to consider before any devices, whether new or 'new to you', are unwrapped on December 25th. [4 tips for giving tech gifts this Christmas - UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

### **Curriculum and Enrichment Information:**

A reminder that you can view the curriculum maps for each year group and find other useful information (links below). We hope this information will be useful for parents and aid them in supporting their child with their studies and talking about school at home.

Academic curriculum: <https://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/academic-curriculum/>

### **PSHE and RSE:**

The academic curriculum at BFS is further supplemented with a comprehensive and coherent PSHE/RSHE 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 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/>

You can find the RSE policy on our website: <https://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/downloads-policies/>

As part of our review process we welcome your feedback about the RSE policy and curriculum overview. You can complete the consultation survey here: [RSE Consultation Survey](#)

If you require any further information about our PSHE or RSHE programmes, please contact Mrs Sharma: [ssharma@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk](mailto:ssharma@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk)

### **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. In addition, student reception is open before school, and at break and lunch. A member of staff in student reception will be able to give advice and point pupils in the right direction for a range of different queries. They can also send a message to a specific member of staff on their behalf.

Pupils also have additional opportunities to discuss their health and wellbeing. We have school counsellors and a school nurse who come into BFS each week. Appointments need to be booked in advance, so please speak to your child's pastoral leader for further information.

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

### **SEND Governor:**

Kerri Rennie is the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Governor at Bedford Free school. She would welcome hearing from parents/carers. She says *"I can listen to feedback and extend support, advice or guidance if necessary. I have thirteen years of experience as an active member of the SEND community in Bedfordshire. I understand the impact on families and the need to have clear lines of communication. If you have queries, views, opinions or simply want to chat please get in touch"*. You can contact Kerri via her BFS email: [Krennie@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk](mailto:Krennie@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk)

### **School Equipment:**

With over two full weeks holiday coming up and some of our children expecting a visit from Father Christmas, now is an opportune time to ensure your child's school bag is appropriate for school and their pencil cases are fully stocked. We continuously make the analogy of our time in school being like climbing a mountain and how one needs the right equipment to get to the top successfully. Can I ask that you support your child in their climb by prioritising and organising them with all the necessary equipment ready for their new term? A full copy of the equipment list can be found on our website:

<https://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/the-school-day-uniform-and-equipment/>

We have also noticed that many of our pupils have been busy growing during the last few months which has meant that a small number of them appear to have outgrown their uniform. As such we would like to take the opportunity to remind you that Bedford Free School uniform regulation states that skirts should be: **KNEE LENGTH** and selected styles from school supplier (Josens) only: 'Davenport' pleat skirt, 'Salisbury' straight skirt, 'Luton' straight skirt'.

To ensure our uniform and presentation standards remain high, please make sure your child has the correct BFS PE kit. Further details can be found on our website. Optional additional winter items include 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 all PE kit worn must be standard BFS kit from our school supplier. Pupils are not permitted to wear hoodies. Any thermals worn underneath PE kit must be plain black and unbranded.

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. A reminder that 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 winter intensifies and the weather gets colder and wetter it's really important all pupils have a suitable and waterproof school coat.

### **Healthy School:**

Please remember that we are a healthy school and as such would not expect pupils to have items such as sweets, fizzy drinks and chewing gum. 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.

### **KS3 Mid-year exams:**

After Christmas pupils in Year 7, 8 & 9 will undertake formal mid-year exams. These exams differ from previous end of unit assessments, as they will sample and test pupils on what they have learnt over the course of this year so far (and previous years if your child is in Y8 and Y9). Exam results will be given out at Progress Evenings which will take place over the course of next half-term (please note dates in the calendar at the end of this newsletter) as well as valuable feedback from subject teachers about further progression.

Pupils will sit these exams in normal lessons with their subject teachers. Most exams are made up of a knowledge section (short knowledge questions) and an application of knowledge section (an essay or series of short exam questions). All pupils will have had a dedicated assembly explaining the rationale and expectations behind the exams. They will also be provided with an exam timetable and a blank revision plan to complete. Pupils should use their yellow 100% books, which contain knowledge maps, to help them revise as well as any class booklets, resources or additional revision sheets provided by their subject teachers.

There is a high degree of challenge involved in the exams and pupils will need to be fully prepared in order to ensure their success. Your support, encouragement and interest can make a spectacular difference to your child's motivation and ability to cope with the academic and organisational demands of the exams. At BFS pupils are taught to use a number of key 'science of learning' revision strategies to enhance their learning and increase long term memory retention. These strategies have been identified through robust and extensive research by world renowned cognitive psychologists as being most effective at enabling learning. Details of these can be found in the front of pupil's 100% books. As such pupils have been encouraged to undertake lots of retrieval practice as part of their revision schedule.

If you would like any further information or advice regarding revision or the curriculum, please contact your child's subject teacher or the Head of Department (Subject Leader). They can be contacted via a note in your child's planner, by telephone or via e-mail. More general queries should be addressed to your child's tutor or their Pastoral Leader.

### **Year 10 Progress Evening - 6<sup>th</sup> January:**

A reminder to all parents of Year 10 pupils that progress evening will take place on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> January 2022 (the first week back). This will be an important opportunity to find out how your child is doing in their GCSE studies and receive advice about their continuing pathway to academic success. In order to book appointments, you will need to log onto the 'Schoolcloud' system, through the email that you will have received. The booking system is now live and appointments are filled on a first come, first served basis. You must ensure that an appointment is booked for all of your child's subject teachers on the evening. Any questions please contact Ms Robinson.

### **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](mailto: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](mailto:covid@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk).

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](mailto:shaskins@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk)).

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

### **Daily testing for contacts of COVID-19**

From Tuesday 14 December, a new national approach to daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 is being introduced (including until the end of this term). All adults who are fully vaccinated and children aged 5 to 18 years and 6 months, identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 – whether Omicron or not – are encouraged to take a lateral flow device (LFD) test every day for 7 days instead of self-isolating. Daily testing by close contacts will help to slow the spread of COVID-19. Daily testing for contacts of COVID-19 will help protect education settings by reducing transmission and will also help keep pupils in face-to-face education.

Once notified by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact, all eligible staff, pupils and students should take an LFD each day for 7 days and report the results online via the NHS website and to the school. If they test negative, they can continue to attend their education setting. This approach should also be adopted over the winter break and on return in January.

If they test positive, they should self-isolate and order a PCR test to confirm the result. If the PCR is positive, they must self-isolate for 10 days. If the PCR test is negative, they no longer need to self-isolate but should continue to carry out the remainder of the daily tests, and only need to isolate if it is positive.

All staff and pupils have access to home testing. If you have not previously consented to home testing and would like test kits, please email our testing co-ordinator, Seran Haskins, [shaskins@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk](mailto:shaskins@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk).

### **COVID testing upon return in January:**

Upon return in January and over the course of the first couple of days, pupils will be offered to undertake one COVID test in school. By testing we will help to reduce the spread of the virus and help break transmission links by identifying those that may be carrying the virus unknowingly. I am strongly encouraging pupils to be tested to help keep our school community safe.

All pupils will return on Wednesday 5th January at the normal time and testing will be run on a rota basis within the normal school day and over the course of the first couple of days. Pupils will be offered one supervised test in our testing centre and will then be provided with additional home test kits to continue testing at home.

**In order for your child to be tested in school you must provide your consent.** If you have previously completed a consent form then no further action is required. However, if you have not previously provided one please complete the form and return via email to [shaskins@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk](mailto:shaskins@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk). The form can be found here: [Testing Consent letter](#)

If you no longer wish for your child to be tested please email [shaskins@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk](mailto:shaskins@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk) to confirm this.

Key information:

- You must have provided consent for your child to be tested by returning the consent form previously provided
- Pupils must not eat or drink for 30mins prior to undertaking the test
- If your child has previously tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 90 days we will be unable to test them
- The testing programme at BFS is for people with no symptoms. If your child develops symptoms at any time (including a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) they must immediately self-isolate, and book a test by calling 119 or visiting <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>.

### **End of Term Celebrations:**

With Christmas fast approaching, we have once again organised for a Christmas lunch at school. This year we will be holding it on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> December. It will be the traditional roast turkey (Halal available) with trimmings and for our vegetarian pupils, roast vegetable parcels, there will of course be Christmas crackers. Please be aware that in order for the kitchen to prepare we are not able to sell any other food from the canteen on this day (at either break or lunch), therefore if you have not purchased a Christmas lunch for your child, please ensure you provide them with a packed lunch and snacks for breaktime instead.

Although we are unable to enjoy our usual End of term Christmas Assembly at St Pauls Church this year we have prepared a virtual celebration instead. This will be played to pupils on the last Friday and promises to be filled with some festive treats and all the usual great performances.

We will finish at the slightly earlier time of 14:40 on the last day of term (Friday 17<sup>th</sup> December).

### **Parking and Drop-off:**

A reminder that our designated drop-off and pick-up point according to our travel plan is Melbourne Street carpark, please ensure this is done safely. 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, Farm Foods or at Bedford College and please do not wait in disabled spaces - 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. We would really appreciate your support with this please.

### **Operation Encompass:**

The school has been given the opportunity to take part in a project that will run jointly between schools, Bedford Borough Council and Bedfordshire Police.

Operation Encompass is the reporting to schools, prior to the start of the next school day, when a child or young person has experienced or been exposed to any domestic abuse. It replaces Relay system which is currently in operation.

Operation Encompass will ensure that a member of the school staff, known as a Key Adult, is trained to allow them to liaise with the police and to use the information that has been shared, in confidence, while ensuring that the school is able to make provision for possible difficulties experienced by children, or their families, who have been experienced a domestic abuse incident.

We are keen to offer the best support possible to all our pupils and we believe this will be extremely beneficial for all those involved. The system will go live from February next year and further information will be available on our website.

**BFS Staff Training Days:**

A reminder that Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022 is a staff training day. We look forward to welcoming all pupils back on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January at the normal time.

**Thank You:**

As you are aware, after nine incredible years at BFS I have taken the decision that this term will sadly be my last. BFS has been such a huge part of my life for the best part of a decade and stepping away wasn't an easy decision. I'm exceptionally proud of everything we've achieved since 2012 and the amazing journey which we've undertaken together. I consider it a huge privilege to have been Principal and to have led such an incredible school and family of fantastic colleagues and pupils.

As this will be my last newsletter I wanted to take the opportunity to express my sincerest thanks for all your dedication and support. Support from families is a key part of the BFS partnership and something I've very much valued throughout my time at the school.

I know that BFS will continue to go from strength to strength, under Jane Herron, who as you know will be Interim Principal from January. She will be making a small number of other interim appointments to ensure that pupils continue to receive the high-quality education that we expect at BFS over the remainder of the academic year.

I hope that during this holiday you have some time to spend with loved ones, and that you have a really enjoyable and restful period.

All the best for the future.



Tim Blake  
**Principal**



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