



BEDFORD
FREE SCHOOL

www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk

27th January 2022

Dear Parents / Carers & Pupils,

It's been a fantastic start to 2022 so far. Despite a higher than usual level of both staff and pupil absence (for obvious reasons) pupils have demonstrated both respect and resilience. Lessons continue to be calm and focused, and pupils have been working hard. Years 7-10 have successfully undertaken mid-year exams and are receiving valuable feedback from teachers during both lessons and (virtual) progress evenings. Dates of progress evenings still to take place can be found below – please take careful note of the date to attend these valuable evenings.

During our weekly themes we have already reflected on the meaning of our school daily mantra 'Work Hard and Be Nice' and discussed one of the strands of the BFS mountain rope: resilience. I always admire the way pupils reflect thoughtfully on the themes as they are discussed each week.

Enrichment:

BFS Speakers On Top Again! - The Bedford Free School Public Speaking team enjoyed another successful evening on Tuesday in the Ouse Valley Branch Final of the prestigious *Churchill Public Speaking Competition*. The team, consisting of Year 11 pupils—Roma K as our charismatic chairperson, Sophie L as our inspirational speaker and Riya L as our insightful and probing questioner—have progressed to the South-Central regional final in Oxford in March. They will be hoping to make it one step further to the national final in April. Congratulations to all three!



We are so very proud of Year 10 student leaders who have committed to working with two local primary schools in their '**Reading Support**' Elective. One group goes to our trust partner school Elstow and another works remotely with Priory Primary. At Elstow the leaders are partnered one to one with a younger student and listen and support them with their reading. With Priory Primary the BFS student leaders read stories (online) to the whole of the reception class which they (BFS pupils) have created. BFS students' stories are interactive, allowing reception students to get involved using movement and vocal repetition of keywords. Just wonderful!

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

RESPECT • HONESTY • HIGH EXPECTATIONS

The 'Race to the South Pole' elective class of nine pupils travelled with Mr Normanton and Mr Cox to Cambridge to visit the Scott Polar Research Institute. They were given exclusive access to the museum, giving them a chance to see artefacts from the fateful *Terra Nova* expedition which is the subject of the elective. They saw letters written by Scott from the tent which was his final resting place, as well as equipment from the trip such as the sledges used to haul supplies, reindeer-skin sleeping bags, and the biscuits the explorers lived on. Next stop, the South Pole!



Expectations Reminders:

Drop-off and Pick-up

A reminder again that our designated drop-off and pick-up point according to our travel plan is Melbourne Street carpark. BFS go the extra mile to supervise the crossings and ensure that pupils are safe. As signed and agreed by you 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, inconsiderate and dangerous to our local community 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.

Pupils should not go in Farm Foods...

Due to the behaviour of a very tiny minority of pupils I have re-instated an old rule: pupils at the school may not hang around or be inside Farm Foods unless they are accompanied by a parent. This also reiterates the fact that parents are expected to use Melbourne Street car-park as the drop-off/pick-up point.

Mobile phones/smart watches etc.

We have noticed recently that some pupils are wearing and using smart watches in school. Electronic devices are not allowed. The Home School Agreement states that they should be "out of sight and switched off...they will be confiscated if they are seen or heard anywhere on school premises...the school takes no responsibility whatsoever for their safekeeping." If your child wants to wear a watch please ensure it is not a smart one (i.e. connected to a mobile phone/internet etc.)

Online Safety and use of Social Media

Sadly, this message (sent out in the last newsletter) needs repeating again:

Social media can be a wonderful addition to our lives but if used inappropriately, it can be harmful to both pupils' and staff well-being, place them at risk and can have serious consequences.

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

- *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*

And the 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 inappropriate online behaviour and I need to make it 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 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 there is a clear message that this behaviour will not be tolerated.

COVID-19 Update

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 (LFT or PCR tests) 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

Notify the school immediately (please follow the usual absence reporting system by ringing reception by 8:15am) and you are advised to get them a PCR test.

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.

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).

Please see attached a flowchart from the Local Borough Council for advice for parents. Please also remember to report all test result (positive or negative) via the government website. <https://www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result>

A message from CHUMS

“We just wanted to remind you of our upcoming virtual psychoeducation workshops which we are offering to families in Bedfordshire and Luton. **Please share the following information with all parents/carers, including the attached registration form which includes our referral criteria.** As stated on this, families must be registered to a GP surgery in Central Bedfordshire, Bedford Borough or Luton to be accepted onto a workshop.

Please note that spaces for workshops are limited and allocated on a first-come, first served basis. If families wish to attend any workshop, they need to complete the attached registration form and return it to fwteam@chums.uk.com along with the date they wish to attend.

WORKSHOPS:

Parent Sleep Workshop (Children aged 12 and under) - The workshop will cover the following topics: why sleep is important, what is 'good' sleep, possible causes of sleep difficulties and learning strategies to help overcome sleep problems.

Monday 28th February at 17:00-19:00pm

Teenage Sleep Workshop (Children aged 13+) - The workshop will cover the following topics: why sleep is important, what is 'good' sleep, sleep hygiene tips and strategies for managing worries at night.

Wednesday 2nd February at 16:00-18:00pm

Tuesday 15th March at 16:00-18:00pm

Secondary Resiliency Workshop (For Teens aged 13+) – The workshop will cover the following topics: mental health vs mental health problems, emotional regulation, psychoeducation around anxiety and low mood, and strategies for relaxation.

Wednesday 23rd March at 16:00-18:00pm

Anxiety Workshop (For parents of children under the age of 12) - The workshop will cover the following topics: Emotional development in children, emotional regulation, psychoeducation around anxiety and anxiety management strategies.

Please note: that there is a deadline for registering for these workshops which is a week before the workshop date. If we do not receive the family's registration form by a week before the workshop then the family will not be added to the register. We are willing to make exceptions for families who wish to attend the 0-5 resiliency workshop next Tuesday but they **must** return their registration form by the end of this week.

Any questions please let us know.

Best wishes,
Bethan and Georgia

Child Wellbeing Practitioners"



CHUMS
Mental Health & Emotional Wellbeing Service

The odd pupil lie-in!

Part of the teacher section of the Home school agreement states that

- *"We will constantly strive to become better educators."*

Our staff welcome and readily commit to this and we take part in a plethora of professional development opportunities. There is so much we want to cover to make ourselves the very best teachers we can be that sometimes we struggle to find the time to do so. As such I would like to trial a new initiative. This will mean that sporadically on a Friday morning which follows a progress evening, pupils should arrive to school half an hour later and the gates will open at 8:30am (rather than 8am) and close at 8:55am (rather than 8:25am). The first of these late mornings will be on **February 11th** following the Year 7 progress evening. If a success this will become a permanent occurrence. We will always send you a message to remind you of the late start (alongside the Thursday progress evening early departure text). If a slightly later start time presents a problem for your child/family circumstances then please email arunnegar-clark@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk who can make special arrangements.

And finally...

Please do get in contact with us if you need anything, whether that be queries, problems or just constructive feedback. We are here to serve and as part of that, of course, we want to work closely with you for the very best outcomes for your child/ren.

info@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk

Kindest Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JHerron".

Jane Herron
Principal (Interim)

Bedford Free School – Key Dates 2021-2022	
Spring Term	
27 th January 2022	Year 9 Progress Evening
3 rd February 2022	Year 8 Progress Evening
10 th February 2022	Year 7 Progress Evening
11 th February 2022	Later school start 8:55am
14th – 18th February 2022	HALF TERM
21 st – 25 th February 2022	Year 11 Mock Exams
10 th March 2022	Year 9 GCSE & Options Evening
17 th March 2022	Y11 Progress Evening
18 th March 2022	Later school start 8:55am (provisional)
4th April – 18th April 2022	EASTER HOLIDAYS
Summer term	
19 th April 2022	Pupils back to school
21 st April 2022	Year 7 Progress Evening
22 nd April 2022	Later school start 8:55am (provisional)
2nd May 2022	BANK HOLIDAY (School is closed)
5 th May 2022	Year 10 Progress Evening
6 th May 2022	Later school start 8:55am (provisional)
12 th May 2022	Year 8 Progress Evening
13 th May 2022	Later school start 8:55am (provisional)
30th May – 3rd June 2022	HALF TERM
6 th June 2022	Pupils back to school
24 th June – 1 st July 2022	Year 10 Mock Exams
4 th July – 8 th July 2022	Activities Week/Year 10 Work Experience
14 th July 2022	Sports Day
19 th July 2022	Year 10 Progress Evening
20 th July 2022	Later school start 8:55am (provisional)
21 st July 2022	BFS End of Year Assembly
22nd July – xx September 2022	SUMMER HOLIDAYS

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.