



BEDFORD
FREE SCHOOL

www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk

15th March 2022

Dear Parents / Carers & Pupils,

Term continues to tick by as we move into longer days and (hopefully) sustained warmer, drier and sunnier weather. It is such a pleasure to be enjoying my pre-work dog walk in the daylight again now, hearing birds sing, seeing crocus, snowdrops and daffodils bloom and leaf buds forming on trees ready for spring leaves. I stay eternally thankful for the small things including the lovely congratulations I have received from so many pupils, parents and staff since my permanent appointment of Principal of BFS. As I said to staff in January, under my leadership it will be business as usual – that is to provide a great education in a warm, safe environment to well-deserving pupils.



Lessons as always are calm and focused with teachers extending a consistent expectation that pupils work hard. Year 9 have had their Options Information Evening and will be choosing exactly which subjects they will prefer to study at GCSE Level and Year 11 Progress Evening (and mock result release) takes place next Thursday 17th March. It has been so lovely to start to hold these events in person, face to face again. Dates of progress evenings still to take place this year can be found below – please take careful note of your date so that you may attend these most valuable evenings.

Recognitions:

I would like to make special mention of two of our pupils who have recently acted in a most mature and charitable manner in the wider community. Firstly, David (Y11) who turned up to the Running Elective Parkrun in November and has run or volunteered at every Parkrun since. For the last few weeks despite being injured himself, he has been volunteering, and our teachers report that he has been one of the most enthusiastic and encouraging volunteers there. Secondly, Rosie (Y10) who administered care to a lady who had collapsed in the street near school. Despite being surrounded by adults, Rosie took charge of the situation and looked after the patient by listening carefully to and concisely executing the advice of the emergency services, talking to her and ensuring she was warm and breathing until the ambulance arrived. Well done to both – we are very proud of you.

World Book Day

Bedford Free School celebrated World Book Day in school on Thursday 3rd March. As well as receiving their Book Tokens to either receive £1 off a book or to get a special book for free, pupils in all year groups participated in a number of activities throughout the week. Teachers across the subjects read an instalment of a short story each day to the students in DEAR and students used their detective skills to work out which teacher was talking about their favourite books in 'The Masked Reader'. Finally,

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RESPECT • HONESTY • HIGH EXPECTATIONS

students have been donating any spare/used books back to the local community – donations are still being taken if you would like to contribute! Thank you to all students who have taken part!

More Success for BFS!

Sophie Lehain won the Best Speaker award in the South East Regional Final of The English Speaking Union, Churchill Public Speaking Competition Saturday 5th March 2022. The team, which also included Riya Lal and Roma Kealy, finished runners up in the team competition held at the magnificent Stowe School. All three should be very proud indeed.



Bedfordshire Festival of Music, Speech and Drama

A huge congratulations to Naveen Prem for winning his category (Brass Solo, grade 4/5) and to Shakil Amin who also won his category (Guitar or Ukulele, any age/standard). Both students played exceptionally well and were very deserving of first place. Congratulations also goes to Skylah Sharma on her first entry in the festival. Skylah received some great feedback from the judges!

BFS Portrait Artist of the Year

Students across the year groups at BFS were invited to enter the Portrait artist of the year competition run by Mrs Burbridge. There were over 20 entries and Mrs Burbridge had the unenviable task of whittling the number down to 10. The talented ten students stay late every Friday for a seminar on painting and then fulfil a task to get through to the next round. So far, the students have painted a still life, a portrait of Mr Cox and now a family member. The final prize winner will have their name on an honours board and have a commission to paint our former and current Principal, Mr Blake and Mrs Herron. The portraits and the artists' names will stay displayed in the school forever.



Matilda the Musical!

Rehearsals for the school musical are well underway with only 2 weeks until the show. The cast are very excited to be back on stage after 2 long years! Kelsey-Neen Kenning who plays Miss Trunchbull said *'this is going to be an emotional performance for those of us who are in year 11 as it will be our last musical at BFS. We have worked so hard to make it the best performance it can be and I am proud of be a part of the show again!'*

Tickets are selling fast so don't miss out! If you would like to purchase tickets then you can via Event Brite <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/276634670747>

Looking after mental wellbeing

Dr Olivia Remes, a renowned mental health researcher at Cambridge University says; *“The core of anxiety is fear and restlessness...An example is excessive worrying. If you worry so much that you start to have muscle tension, or it interferes with your sleep, relationships or work – that’s when you might have an anxiety disorder. Separating anxious emotions from anxiety disorders can be tough - being appropriately anxious is a good thing. Normal anxiety can protect you and get you out of dangerous situations. It is when anxiety starts to appear in situations that are not threatening, or interferes with your life in detrimental ways, that it can become problematic”*. School is very aware of how important it is to take care of one’s mental health, especially following the challenge of living through two years of a pandemic. BFS pays heed to this in a number of ways;

- Through the morning addresses which often refer to taking care of ourselves physically and emotionally (in fact the Dr Remes’ extract above was delivered to the pupils in a morning address)
- Through educating pupils directly in PSHE lessons* - details of which may be found on the school website here: <https://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/pshe/>
- By having dedicated staff in school who can help to support pupils day-to-day and signpost further if necessary
- By providing additional school services including counsellors, a school nurse, direct access to a named Early Help Practitioner and an embedded CAMH worker and signposting parents to wider support (see leaflet attached and school website)

*An example of the summary of the content of a Year 10 Mental Health and Emotional Wellbeing PSHE lesson:

What will you learn today?

- *What good mental health is and some positive strategies on how you can achieve this.*
- *The causes and triggers for unhealthy coping strategies, such as self-harm.*
- *Where and how to seek support if you are worried about your own or someone else’s mental wellbeing.*

If you or your child have any concerns, mental health or otherwise please talk to us. As I said in my last newsletter *‘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.’* In the first instance please email: -

Your child’s tutor (for general issues)

Ms Costin-Webb CCostin-Webb@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk (Mental health)

Ms Carpenter CCarpenter@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk (SEN)

satchel:one

We strongly recommend that in order to support your child/ren with their homework parents/carers should create and maintain their own satchel:one account as well as your child having theirs. There are lots of useful parent and student guides, FAQs and videos on the satchel:one website and app. Please see the link <https://help.satchelone.com/en/collections/1695420-parents> to find out how you can set up homework alerts and even reset your child’s account. If you do have any issues with satchel:one they can provide support <https://contactus.satchelone.com/> or you can contact Mrs Logan at BFS via info@bedfordfreeschool.co.uk

Standards

We pride ourselves at Bedford Free School on sky-high expectations for our pupils and maintaining fantastic standards of conduct so that pupils may learn in a distraction free zone. The pupils are clear that every rule implemented at BFS is done so for a well-considered reason – we constantly and consistently ‘sweat the detail’. Some things that parents can help with at home before pupils leave for their school day are, ensuring children:

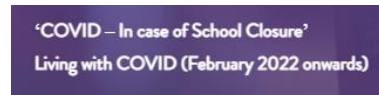
- Have the correct school uniform including black shoes; no make-up or hoodies, jewellery does not exceed the ‘1 rule’, no facial piercings and hair to be natural colours only
- Have knee length skirts and (predominantly) black bags
- Have healthy food; no mega bags of crisps’, packets of biscuits, sweets, fizzy drinks or chewing gum
- Have all necessary equipment
- Arrive on time to school BEFORE the gate closes at 8:25am and attend daily without fail unless genuinely ill
- Give you their Achievement Cards every Wednesday evening to sign.

Drop-off and Pick-up

It is always worth including a reminder that the 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.

COVID-19

Please see the school website for information about covid and an updated risk assessment.



<https://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/>
<https://www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Risk-Assessment-BFS-v5-2021-22.pdf>

The next pupil lie-in!

Following the success of the later start on February 11th we will continue to hold a training session for staff on Friday mornings following a progress evening. This means the next one is Friday 18th March. Remember we have decided to do this as 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. This means that on a Friday morning following 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). 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.

Kindest Regards

Jane Herron
Principal

Bedford Free School – Key Dates 2021-2022	
Spring Term	
17 th March 2022	Y11 Progress Evening
18 th March 2022	Later school start 8:55am
4 th April – 18 th April 2022	<i>EASTER HOLIDAYS</i>
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
2 nd May 2022	<i>BANK HOLIDAY (School is closed)</i>
5 th May 2022	Year 10 Progress Evening
6 th May 2022	Later school start 8:55am
12 th May 2022	Year 8 Progress Evening
13 th May 2022	Later school start 8:55am
30 th May – 3 rd June 2022	<i>HALF TERM</i>
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
21 st July 2022	BFS End of Year Assembly
22 nd July – xx September 2022	<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.