



BEDFORD
FREE SCHOOL

www.bedfordfreeschool.co.uk

18th May 2022

Dear Parents / Carers,

Please read this letter carefully.

As GCSE examinations get under way and our pupils make us proud sitting the examinations or supporting those that are, I need to write to you to ask for your assistance in communicating some messages around safety to all children.

Safety is of paramount importance. I do not underestimate or undervalue the trust you place in my colleagues and me in sending your child to Bedford Free School. As such, it is our number one priority.

This is why my colleagues and I are always present before and after school, outside of the school, on the crossings and why we are so strict about how pupils should cross the road and our designated drop-off point: Melbourne Street carpark.

It is also why we are so strict about items that can be brought to school, and why we are very clear about severe sanctions for risking others' safety in the broadest possible sense.

Safety Reminders

Walking to and from school

Last week some Year 7 boys were approached and felt very threatened by a man who tried to grab them as if he wanted to take them with him.

I realise that this may be worrying, but I do not believe there is cause for significant alarm – we are confident that ensuring children take reasonable precautions without causing upset or anxiety will keep them as safe as possible. So, it would be worthwhile you spending time talking to your child and reminding them of how they can best stay safe. Using common sense is important, so we would encourage you to encourage your child to;

- walk home in pairs or more,
- be aware of surroundings so avoid wearing head phones which blocks hearing,
- hide valuables away,
- do not loiter in hidden places such as the carparks near the school,
- have an expected home time and be clear about arrangements if normal home time changes.

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RESPECT • HONESTY • HIGH EXPECTATIONS

The school building is open every day until 6:30pm so if your child feels unsafe and they are still near to school then tell them to return to school immediately and come into reception where they can be looked after accordingly. We are liaising closely with the police and you may see something on social media. The police have also informed me that they are increasing their presence around the school after our requests to them.

As always, if you are concerned about anything please let us and/or the police know immediately.

Forbidden Items

Some parents have asked for clarity on expectations at school. As a part of keeping pupils safe, you will know that we would take the strongest possible action if pupils bring things to school that may harm themselves or others – including offensive weapons, drugs, cigarettes or alcohol. It also means that we ensure that mobile phones must be kept out of sight.

Vapes

According to the vaping law in the UK, you must be 18 or over to buy e-cigarettes or e-liquids. By this law, if a vape retailer sells vape to a minor, the retailer could be fined up to £2500 as a result. At this stage in time scientists have a very limited idea about the long-term impact vaping may have on a human body; consider what we eventually learnt about the effect smoking has.

Please be aware that any pupil caught with or using a vape will be subject to the most serious sanction.

Mobile Phones

It is very difficult to concentrate with a mobile phone in your pocket. Some schools and studies have reported widespread anxiety and even significant cases of bullying centred around mobile phone apps, and we know they are a distraction to adults as well as children.

Mobile phones are to be in bags, switched off, and not retrieved at any point during the school day.

A very small minority of pupils have been using their phones in school, including photographing and filming others without consent. All pupils have signed the home school agreement to agree that they:

...will keep any electronic devices out of sight and switched off.... I will conduct myself appropriately online.

One of the most important things for us here at BFS is applying the ‘Sophie test’ which asks us as staff what we would want for our own children; we want every pupil to feel safe and secure. Consistent with the rest of this letter, I want to ensure pupils that if others make you unsafe through use of their mobile phone, we will ensure they are sanctioned appropriately.

I have warned the pupils that in order to keep us focused on the most important aspects of school – their learning, I will be carefully monitoring future incidents and am considering tighter rules around having a mobile phone in school, including extended confiscation over a long period of time or a system that means that they are not to be in bags at all. I have informed the pupils that this is dependent on them sticking to the rules – we haven’t had this problem for many years so we expect them to continue in this vein.

I would appreciate you reinforcing our expectations with your child.

Warmer weather

We want pupils to be safe and comfortable so that they are learning.

As the hotter weather arrives please ensure your child keeps themselves cool, well hydrated and wears sun cream on days when they will be in the sun for a prolonged period - for example in a PE lesson. In the summer term only, pupils do not need to be wearing a school jumper and wearing a short-sleeved shirt underneath their blazer is advised.

A final uniform reminder that girls' skirts should be knee length and that trousers should be school style only not for e.g. no skinny trousers.

I want to finish where I started – our pupils continually make us very proud and we have some of the highest standards in the country. I know that the pupils and their families are as proud as we are of those standards. Visitors tell us again and again what a purposeful, warm school we are. I want to again wish our Year 11 pupils well in their examinations, and thank you for reinforcing our expectations with your children – they continue to go the extra mile and I know they will be very successful if we work together.

As always, I'd be delighted to hear from you if you have questions or queries over this letter or anything else.

With very many thanks for your support.

Kindest regards,



Jane Herron
Principal

Bedford Free School – Key Dates	
Summer term	
<i>30th May – 3rd June 2022</i>	<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
21 st July 2022	BFS End of Year Assembly
<i>22nd July</i>	<i>SUMMER HOLIDAYS begin</i>
1 st -2 nd September 2022	Staff training
5-7 th September 2022	Year 7 induction
8 th September 2022	Year 8-11 back to school

Please note that occasionally dates may be altered or cancelled.

There will be notification in case of change.