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EDUCATION

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TO BE THE BEST
THEY CAN BE

26 March 2015

Dear Parents,

Another busy term has come to an end at BISS Puxi and as the summer draws in and we get closer to the exams I would like to take some time to reflect on the journey our Year 11 students have taken to reach this point.

Teaching and Learning

The (I)GCSE course is intense and rigorous and it is the best preparation for International Baccalaureate. IGCSE's are externally validated in the form of assessed coursework and exams and that is where we will be next term. This term has focused heavily on academics with coursework being submitted, refined and resubmitted in a wide range of subjects. Students have been attending lunchtime and after school revision classes as well as meeting regularly with their mentors in order to put them in the best position to achieve excellent GCSE grades. With that in mind, I would like to remind parents that the Learning Resource Centre at BISS will continue to be open on Saturdays from 9:30 am – 1:00 pm after the holiday. Students are welcome to come and use this as a quiet working area in the lead up to their exams.

Extra-curricular activities

Away from academics, the Year 11 students continue to play an exciting role in the wider life of the school. Many students were involved in an excellent production of "A Midsummer night's dream" whilst others have been involved in film workshops, making movies for the Shanghai film festival. The Year 11's continue to make significant contributions to a great many sports teams with students representing the school at swimming, basketball and football this term. ACAMIS basketball was a huge success for the players as both teams won their respective titles. Music has been another example of high performance this term with Key Stage 4 students playing live at a number of events, including BISS Has Got Talent.

Teaching in term 3

We strongly believe that students' exam preparation is best done in partnership and with the support of their subject teachers. As a result, we do not schedule an extended 'study leave' prior to the exams. Lessons in term 3 will be revision focused with a number of booster classes added to our regular curriculum. Students are also strongly encouraged to continue with their independent study during evenings and weekends.

Our last day of regular teaching will be Wednesday 29 April. After the exam period finishes the school will be running a pre-IB programme for those hoping to return to BISS to continue their education. This programme is specifically designed to offer a chance to develop a range of the key skills required to be successful at IB. The dates for this will be 15 – 19 June.



The Exam period

GCSE exams run from the 5 May until 15 June. Morning papers begin at 9:00am, afternoon papers begin at 1:00pm and we have some evening exams starting at 5:00pm. It is vital students arrive at school 30 minutes before the exam so they can be at the exam venue 5 minutes before the start of each paper with the correct equipment.

During the times that students are not sitting exams, they may study at school (where teachers will be available to support them) or independently at home.

Work over the Easter period

At this stage it is vital your son or daughter is revising hard and completing the past papers. As you may know I am a great advocate of past papers being the best preparation for the exam. I always offer the comparison of learning to drive, in that we take lessons on the road, it is not a theoretical test but a practical test and the more often we drive the route the more familiar we are with it. In the same way, the more often the students take these papers the more familiar they will be with the examiners style of questions and expectations. Copies of past papers from every subject can be located on the school's Moodle site under KS4 – Year 11- Past Papers; students have also been given papers from each subject to complete over the holiday.

The predicted grades on this report are an excellent indicator of the results your son or daughter will likely achieve in August. These grades are a combination of coursework marks and summative assessments the students have been undertaking in recent weeks. At this stage I would hope these grades are reflective of your child's ability, if this is not the case then there is only a short time to make changes and these changes need to be supported from home. It is time for all of our students to look inside themselves and consider if they are giving all they can. I would ask you have a conversation with your son or daughter about their predicted grades; parental engagement, coupled with quality education and feedback, are key drivers to academic success, it is very important the message that hard work brings just reward is reiterated at home. Please ask to see your son or daughter's revision timetable and discuss with them the learning they have undertaken each day. These small things will make a big difference to their final grades; they will get plenty of time to relax once their exams are finished.

Finally, I want to end with a reminder to parents and students that after the students return from this holiday exams will start in the first week back. We have language orals, PE practical and the Art exam all within a few weeks after the break, with the first written exam taking place on Tuesday 5 May.

With best wishes

Paul Kelly
Head of Key Stage 4