

General Information

Balcarras

Cheltenham 2017 -2018



Aims of Balcarras School

At Balcarras we provide our pupils with education of the highest quality so that they leave us with the qualifications, skills and personal qualities they need to lead successful lives.

To achieve this we will ensure:

- Commitment to the highest academic standards
- A caring and stimulating environment with excellent behaviour and discipline
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities
- Partnerships with parents, business and the local community

School calendar

Autumn Term 2017

Begins: Tuesday 5th September

Half-term: Monday 23rd October – Friday 27th October

Ends: Wednesday 20th December

Spring Term 2018

Begins: Wednesday 3rd January

Half-term: Monday 12th February – Friday 16th February

Ends: Wednesday 28th March

Summer Term 2018

Begins: Monday 16th April

Half-term: Monday 28th May – Friday 1st June

Ends: Friday 20th July

Administration

Balcarras is an 11-18 Academy.

Chairman of the School Governors:

Mr Philip Collie

Kelsey

St Anne's Road

Cheltenham

GL52 2ST

Headteacher:

Mr Dominic Burke BA

Deputy Headteacher:

Mr Neil Baxter MA (Cantab)

Head of Sixth Form:

Mr Brett Jouny BA MA

Assistant Headteachers:

Mrs Rebecca Atkin BSc

Miss Elizabeth Hunt BSc

Mr Gary Towers BSc

Mr Paul Greenway BA

Admissions Criteria for Years 7 - 11 for Balcarras School September 2018 (summary version)

The number of intended admissions is 194 in Years 7 to 11. Where applications for admission in Year 7 exceed the number of places available, places will be allocated according to the following criteria, applied in order:

1. Children in Public Care (Looked After Children), including children who have previously been 'looked after' and later subject to an adoption residence, or special guardianship order.
2. Children living in the school's priority catchment area who have a sibling attending the school where the sibling is or has been a member of Years 7-11 and who will continue to be on the school roll when the applicant's child is admitted. This criterion does not apply if the sibling has only attended Years 12-13.
The map of the school's priority catchment area can be viewed on the school's website or at school by appointment with Admissions Secretary, Mrs Massey.
3. Children of full or part-time salaried members of staff who have been employed at Balcarras for two years or more at the time of the application for admission, or of a member of staff recruited to fill a vacant post for which there is a demonstrable skill shortage.
4. Children living in the priority catchment area served by the school, with the strongest geographical claim, measured in a straight line from the Ordnance Survey address point of the child's home address (including flats) to the Ordnance Survey address point of the school, using the Local Authority's computerised measuring system, with those living closer to the school receiving the higher priority.
5. Children who live outside the priority catchment area served by the school, who have a sibling attending the school where the sibling is or has been a member of Years 7-11 and who will continue to be on the school roll when the applicant's child is admitted. This criterion does not apply if the sibling has only attended Years 12-13.
6. Other children with the strongest geographical claim, measured in a straight line from the Ordnance Survey address point of the child's home address (including flats) to the Ordnance Survey address point of the school, using the Local Authority's computerised measuring system, with those living closer to the school receiving the higher priority.

In the event of oversubscription of any of the criteria, where there are two or more children living the same distance from the school, then a 'names in a hat' process will be undertaken by the Admissions' Authority, with the first name drawn being successful.

Please note: A full version of the criteria is available from the school website www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk or from the school on request. It is also available on the Gloucestershire local authority website.

Many more applications are made each year than the 194 places available. Parents who are considering applying for places for their children are welcome to visit the school during our Open Week early in the autumn term, when morning tours are conducted by the Head and members of the Senior Management Team from Monday to Thursday. On the Thursday of that week the school is open during the evening, when prospective parents and pupils may meet Balcarras pupils and staff and see all that the school has to offer. Prospective parents are welcome to visit the school at other times and need only contact us to make an appointment.

For September 2017 entry to Balcarras, a total of 643 applications were received. Parents are entitled to appeal if their child is not allocated a place at Balcarras. Details of how to appeal are available on request.

Transfer to secondary school

All our partner primary schools are visited by a member of Balcarras staff during the summer term, when the children may ask their questions about 'the big school'. They are given a booklet about Balcarras and are invited to spend a 'taster day' here towards the end of term. We hope that this will relieve any anxieties that the children may have. They can therefore spend the summer holiday looking forward to coming to Balcarras instead of worrying about the prospect!

A meeting for 'new' parents is held near the end of the summer term when details of uniform, tutor groups etc, are given.

The school day

The school day starts at 8.55am and finishes at 3.35pm, with a 20-minute break in the morning and a 55-minute break for lunch. There are four one-hour lessons in the morning session and a one-hour lesson plus a 20-minute assembly/tutor period in the afternoon. **On Fridays we have slightly different lesson times and an earlier finish. Pupils finish school on a Friday at 3.10 pm.**

Keeping in touch

Parents are welcome to contact the school at any time if they are worried about their children or would just like to know more about the school. In most cases the house heads will be the people to see.

Years 7, 9 and 11 receive written reports. Years 8 and 10 have extra parents' meetings instead of written reports. All years have interim reports.

There are regular occasions each year, such as Sports Day and Open Evening, to which all parents are invited. Parents are most welcome at other times. Those interested, for example, in attending afternoon assemblies should please make contact and we will be happy to make the necessary arrangements.

Health

Minor medical problems can be dealt with in the school medical room. If, however, a pupil is taken more than mildly ill at school, the parents are contacted with a view to the pupil returning home as soon as possible. It must be stressed that a pupil is never sent home without our first confirming that a parent, relative or another adult is there to take responsibility.

If it is necessary to send a pupil to hospital, the parents are informed as soon as possible. In order that these steps may be taken speedily, parents are asked to complete a form giving home telephone number, place of work, emergency telephone number and name of family doctor. Please inform us of any change of address and/or telephone number – this is very important.

Parents are asked to tell the school of any special health problems. Any medically prescribed tablets or medicine to be taken in school must be lodged for safe keeping with the school receptionist and she will issue them to the pupil. Parents must contact the school to discuss a care plan for all medicines held in school. It is expected that all pupils will take part in physical education unless parents provide medical instructions to the contrary.

Charities

Balcarras is involved in a number of charitable activities throughout the year, with the highlight being our annual sponsored walk. We also have a thick jumper day every January/February when we turn off the heating and wear our 'best' Christmas jumpers to school. Half of the money raised goes to WaterAid and the other half goes to environmental projects within the school. Pupils arrange many fundraising activities and the school supports a number of different charities, including Cheltenham Open Door, Macmillan Cancer, Oxfam, Amnesty and different emergency disaster appeals.

Our 2016 annual Sponsored Walk raised just over £12,000 of which £4,000 was given to Cotswold Riding for the Disabled. £6,000 will be put towards developing a link with a school in Malawi, where we will support some individual students so that they can gain an education, as well as assist with building and developments projects in their school and the local community.

The rest is used towards the provision of even better facilities around Balcarras.

Mufti days

These are occasional days when the pupils may attend school out of uniform. They make a small payment for this privilege and the money raised goes to charities chosen by the pupils.

Punctuality and attendance

Pupils should be on the premises at least five minutes before the morning and afternoon sessions begin. The importance of good attendance and punctuality is constantly stressed to the pupils.

In the school year 2016 – 2017 the total number of pupils of compulsory school age on roll was 994. The overall attendance rate was 97%, the highest for any school in the region. We are convinced that high attendance is fundamental to educational success.

When absence or lateness is unavoidable due to illness or other reasonable causes, parents are asked to send with their child on his/her return, a brief note of explanation to his/her tutor. When illness is likely to prevent a pupil from attending school for some time, parents are asked to notify the school by telephone or in writing as soon as possible. Homework can be arranged in such circumstances.

When a visit to the dentist during school time is unavoidable, the pupil is expected to show his/her tutor the relevant appointment card or letter and also to show it to the School Receptionist when signing out. Please try to make appointments outside school hours.

School catering

The school provides an excellent catering service, serving hot food three times a day in relaxed and modern dining rooms.

A breakfast service operates from 8am where a full English breakfast is served for £2.20. Alternatively, a wide variety of pastries, cereals, fruit and yogurts, as well as toast and hot drinks are available.

From 11.00 – 11.20 am we offer a wide range of hot food from bacon rolls to pizzas and also available are an extensive selection of rolls and sandwiches.

Lunch is served at 1.20 pm in seven serving areas; these include hot snacks, grab & go, two main meals counters, a self-serve salad bar, a tuck shop and a 6th form café.

Balcarras has Healthy School Status and we reinforce the healthy eating message as part of the whole school approach to healthy lifestyles, for example our ingredients are sourced from local suppliers and all food is freshly prepared and cooked on the premises. The main course and dessert is available for an amazing £2.20.

It is important to remember that tasty and nutritionally balanced school meals contribute significantly to general wellbeing and help everyone towards achieving their full potential.

We are proud of the quality of the catering provision at Balcarras and of the high proportion of the pupils who choose to use our service. Why not check out the menus on the school's website?

The House system

Each youngster coming to Balcarras is placed in a house tutor group, which is also his/her Year 7 teaching group for most subjects, and is gradually introduced to the ways of the school. Each pupil has a specialist tutor to whom s/he may turn for help at any time.

The four Houses are:

Foley:	Head of House – Mrs Jeanette Corinaldi
Graveney:	Head of House – Mrs Siobhan Winterbottom
Ottewell:	Head of House – Mr Phillip Amor
Selvey:	Head of House – Mr Darren Leatherbarrow

The Houses are named after:

Mrs Winifred Foley,

the celebrated writer of Forest of Dean life

Mr Tom Graveney, OBE,

one of England's greatest cricketers, who lives in Cheltenham

Mr Gordon Ottewell,

writer of children's and nature books and one time Head of Glenfall Primary School which sends children each year to Balcarras

Mr Peter Selvey,

who taught for nearly three decades at Charlton Kings Secondary School and was Head of Mathematics there from 1963 until he retired.

Discipline

School rules are few but are based on common sense and, properly observed, ensure the safety, comfort and good order of the school to the benefit of all. A sensible and responsible standard of behaviour is expected of all pupils, both in and out of school, based on courtesy and consideration for others at all times.

The school is a no smoking area and does not allow smoking on the premises or off it, including the time going to and from school. E-cigarettes and vapes are not permitted.

Parents, pupils, staff and governors all contributed to the drawing up of the school's behaviour and bullying policies and Home-School Agreement, copies of which are available from the school office. Parents have a major role to play in enabling children to reach their full potential and will be involved with serious cases of indiscipline.

Within the behaviour policy is a Code of Conduct which gives clear expectations of the pupils' behaviour. The school reserves the right to take appropriate measures to ensure the pupils behave in a reputable way. School detention and exclusion from school are the two most serious sanctions.

On the other hand, the school constantly looks to commend pupils for good work and behaviour, with parents also being informed when their child does particularly well. A system of merits and commendations operates in all years.

Prefects

There are two grades of prefects at Balcarras – School Prefects and House Prefects. School Prefects have higher status and a wider range of responsibilities than House Prefects, but both groups play

Cycles and mopeds

Bicycles may be ridden to and from school on condition that they are maintained in a safe condition, are ridden safely and are wheeled on the school premises. Pupils must wear a helmet when riding to and from school. Racks in a secure compound are available. Cycles must be secured with a high quality 'U' lock when left unattended. Cycling passes are issued by house heads following the completion of the application form. Cycles must not be left at school after 6pm. (Cycles are not covered by the school's insurance policy).

When pupils are legally of age they may, with permission, ride mopeds to school following the same rules as for cycles. Permission is not automatic. The member of staff responsible is Mr D Chmielowski. Students in the sixth form are not allowed to park cars on the school premises and we encourage students to walk, cycle or use public transport.

Lost property

This should be handed to, and may be claimed from, the school office. Items not claimed after four weeks are disposed of.

It is particularly requested that all property be clearly and indelibly marked with the pupil's name and that no valuables be brought to school as we really cannot accept responsibility for anything that may go missing. Accumulated lost property is displayed regularly (dates on the website) and then unclaimed items are disposed of.

Lockers

These are available to pupils for a rent of £3 a year. The money raised is used to make essential repairs. Each pupil who hires a locker must supply a suitable padlock, which remains the property of the pupil. Mrs Davis is in charge of the locker system for the main school and Mrs Shute for 6th form.

Essential equipment

A sensible case or bag in which to carry books and equipment is essential, as are also a fountain pen, pencils, crayons, ruler, rubber, pair of compasses, protractor and calculator.

Please note that felt-tipped pens, 'Tippex' type liquids and bottles of ink are not allowed in school. Pupils are asked not to use ballpoint pens for neat work.

Gift Aid

Parents are asked to make a contribution to our Gift Aid programme, which provides additional resources for the school. This is entirely voluntary, but we do ask all parents to be involved. This also attracts a contribution from the Treasury as a refund of tax paid.

The money raised is spent on important school resources, including our IT provision and our minibuses. At the moment we are raising about £60,000 per year, which makes a real difference to the equipment we are able to provide.

Please note: If all parents join the scheme, the school will benefit to the tune of approximately £100,000 per annum!

an important part in helping to run the school and to maintain high standards. There is not a fixed number of either grade of prefect; those who we think can do the job will be given the chance. A House Prefect may be promoted to School Prefect at any time.

From the ranks of School Prefects come House Captains and Vice-Captains who form a senior body of pupils consulted from time to time on matters of school policy. School Prefects are entitled to buy the special Balcarras tie, which is also available to teachers, governors and parents, at a subsidised cost of £5.00.

School clothing

This is designed to provide a smart and admired working outfit for school. Apart from the important considerations of pride in the school, parents should be glad not to have to face the constant question: "What shall I wear today?" School uniform has much to commend it. The range of girls' skirts and trousers currently available in so many different retailers has made it increasingly difficult to enforce a single uniform style, particularly with the length of skirts. Girls' and boys' trousers and girls' skirts are available from Schooltogs or The Schoolwear Company only. These will be the only uniform items we insist come from our recognised stockists, so there can no longer be any dispute about their conforming to the school uniform rules.

Details of the Balcarras clothing are as follows:

- Girls' skirts and trousers will only be available from Schooltogs or The Schoolwear Company. Skirts must be knee length
- Black blazer with school badge in House colour
- Trousers for boys only available from Schooltogs or The Schoolwear Company.
- White shirt
- School tie
- Black or grey 'V' neck pullover (not cardigan)
- Black or grey socks (girls may wear grey or black tights in cold weather)
- Black leather shoes

The following are **NOT** regarded as suitable school wear:

Jeans, cord trousers, denim/leather jackets, hooded tops, football scarves, 'fun' badges, sweatshirts, track-suit tops, boots/trainers/brown shoes, sleeveless coats. If in doubt about whether or not a particular article of clothing is suitable please ask your Head of House before buying.

In the interests of safety all pupils are expected to wear sensible footwear on the school premises. High-heeled, sling-backed or studded footwear must not be worn. Trainers and boots are not permitted as normal school uniform.

The most common infringement of uniform regulations is for pupils to have their winter uniform shirts untucked – please encourage your child to tuck theirs in.

Extreme hair styles are not allowed. We expect hairstyles to be smart, tidy and appropriate for school. Boys' hair is expected to be reasonably short. If in doubt, please contact a Head of House prior to any change.

No jewellery apart from watches should be worn. Again this is mainly in the interests of safety, for in the rough and tumble of the playground, rings, ear-rings, etc can easily cause injury. Pupils with pierced ears may wear up to one small gold stud in each ear lobe, NOT sleepers. There is also the problem of security, as jewellery would have to be removed before participation in physical education activities. The PE staff will take in and lock away, if necessary, watches and money, but the school cannot accept responsibility for loss of articles involved.

Summer Uniform

The school summer uniform may be worn from the start of each summer term. Both boys and girls are able to wear polo shirts, which have the house colours piped on the collar and sleeves and are available from Schooltogs. Pupils will also be able to continue to wear winter uniform if they prefer to do so. If you have any queries, please contact your child's Head of House.

Physical Education

In order to take part in the school's physical education programme each pupil should have as part of their school uniform:

Girls

- Plain white T-shirt
- Black skort (available from school)
- Non-marking trainers
- Astro shoes (optional)
- White socks
- Black games socks
- Towel
- Balcarras sweatshirt and jogging trousers (*optional - available from school*)
- Gum shield (*optional - available from school*)
- Shin pads (*optional - available from school*)

Boys

- Plain white T-shirt (*available from school*)
- Red (reversible hoop) rugby shirt (*available from school only*)
- Plain white shorts
- Plain black shorts
- Non-marking trainers
- Football boots
- Black games socks
- Towel
- Gum shield (*optional - available from school*)
- Shin pads (*optional - available from school*)

Garments that are worn during normal lessons are not to be worn for PE.

The Balcarras badge and tie

The Balcarras tie is available for purchase, currently at £5.00. The Balcarras badge is currently available at £7.00. Both items may be purchased from the school or from Schooltogs or The Schoolwear Company. A coloured strip is incorporated into the blazer badge in the colour of each house. Please ensure you purchase the correct house badge, ie Foley (Green); Graveney (Yellow); Ottewell (Blue); Selvey (Red)

Balcarras school clothing is available from local stockists, including Schooltogs and The Schoolwear Company.

The curriculum

The school offers a wide range of courses under the National Curriculum leading to the General Certificate of Secondary Education.

In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils take the following:

- Art
- Computer Science
- Design & Technology
- Drama
- English
- French (*a second foreign language, Spanish or Russian, is introduced in Year 8*)
- Geography
- History
- Mathematics
- Music
- Physical Education
- Religious Education
- Science

In Year 9 students start to study GCSE Science. This gives them three years to complete the Combined Science GCSE.

In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow a varied programme of courses, some of which are chosen in consultation with their parents and the school. Information about these courses is circulated during the spring term of Year 9 and a meeting is held to describe them fully to parents.

Certain subjects are compulsory during these two years. These are:

- English
- Mathematics
- Physical Education
- PSHE (*Personal, Social & Health Education*)
- Science

Optional courses include:

- Art
- Business Studies
- Computing
- Dance
- D&T: Food
- D&T: Product Design
- D&T: Textiles
- Drama
- French
- Geography
- Health & Social Care
- History
- ICT
- Life Skills
- Music
- Physical Education (GCSE)
- Religion, Philosophy & Ethics
- Russian
- Spanish

A small group of students opt to do a study option in which their GCSE subjects are supported.

Homework

Homework is valuable training in independent work and is set for all pupils. Homework is set regularly and guidelines are issued to parents. Homework timetables are issued in September and homework is published on the school website. Homework is carefully thought out and included in the planning of a series of lessons, with the pupils often given a span of time greater than just one evening to complete it.

Balcarras pupils are given study planners at the start of each year in which details of homework set may be entered. The planner

is a crucial part of every pupil's equipment and can be both an essential aide-memoir for the pupil and a valuable medium for communication between parents and tutors/teachers.

If any parents find their children worrying unduly about homework, or spending too much/too little time over it, they should not hesitate to contact the school. This can be done easily via the spaces for messages in the planner.

Teaching groups

In their first twelve months, Year 7 pupils are placed in tutor groups which are also their teaching groups for most subjects. Pupils are set in mathematics early in the year. Most subjects are set from Year 8 onwards.

One of the great benefits of our grouping arrangements is that we make seven tutor groups out of 194 pupils, so that group sizes are small in comparison to many schools.

Qualifications

The external qualifications for which Balcarras pupils are prepared are listed below:

GCSE

- Art
- Business Studies
- Computing
- Dance
- Design & Technology
- Drama
- English
- English Literature
- French
- Geography
- Health & Social Care
- History
- ICT (DiDA)
- Mathematics
- Music
- Physical Education
- Religious Education
- Russian
- Science (*Biology, Chemistry and Physics*)
- Spanish
- Statistics

We also provide the option of Italian and Mandarin GCSEs, which are extra-curricular subjects and can only be taken to GCSE if the student is studying a language to GCSE on the curriculum.

AS and A-LEVEL

- Art
- Biology
- Business
- Chemistry
- Computing
- D&T: Food
- D&T: Product Design
- D&T: Textiles
- Digital Photography
- Economics
- English Literature
- French
- Further Mathematics
- Geography
- General Studies
- History
- Mathematics
- Music
- Physical Education
- Physics
- Politics
- Psychology
- Religious Studies
- Russian
- Spanish
- Theatre Studies
- Applied Science
- Creative Media
- Health & Social Care
- Double Health & Social Care

GCSE Examination Results 2017

In January 2017 there were 194 pupils in Year 11.

	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
English	8	19	34	50	47	22	13	1	0
English Literature	11	25	31	41	57	16	12	1	0
Mathematics	19	32	27	36	46	24	4	5	1

	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Art	22	23	16	19	1	0	0	0
Business Studies	9	28	37	13	6	5	0	0
Computing	4	6	11	1	0	0	0	0
Digital Applications (CiDA)	12	17	16	2	0	0	0	0
D&T: Food	2	6	11	11	0	0	0	0
D&T: Product Design	6	9	18	14	4	2	1	0
D&T: Textiles	2	8	5	5	0	0	0	0
Drama	1	14	22	13	2	2	0	0
French	11	11	21	17	10	1	0	0
Geography	19	24	32	13	6	0	1	0
Health & Social Care	1	5	5	4	6	3	1	0
History	26	23	35	17	8	0	1	0
Music	3	3	8	4	4	3	1	1
Physical Education	12	7	19	9	3	0	0	0
Religious Studies	9	25	20	9	0	1	0	0
Russian	8	14	9	13	4	2	0	0
Science (Additional)	21	72	58	30	11	0	0	0
Spanish	6	5	7	12	9	9	0	0

Summary of GCSE and GNVQ equivalent results

There were 194 Pupils in School

	Achieving 5+ A*-C including English & Maths 5+	Achieving 5+ A*-C including English & Maths 4+	Achieving 5+ English & Maths	EBACC
Balcarras (2016-2017)	77%	92%	77%	56%
England (2015-16)	62%*		n/a	24%

A - C including English & Mathematics (using outgoing grading system)

Pupil Destinations - Year 2017 Leavers

Year 11 (194 Pupils)				Year 13 (177 Pupils)				
Further Education		Employment with training	Employment	Other	Further Education or Art Foundation	Gap Year before Higher Education	Higher Education (University)	Employment/Apprenticeships
Balcarras	Other							
70.1%	26.9%	3%	0%	0%	6%	15%	70%	9%

35% of all students gaining University places went to a Russell Group institution.

Progress 8

Balcarras 2016	0.61
National 2016:	0
In 2016 Balcarras was ranked in the top 3% of all schools nationally.	

Attainment 8

Balcarras 2017:	60
Balcarras 2016:	61
National average 2016:	50

The Progress 8 score of 0.61 was the highest of any school in Gloucestershire including Grammar schools in 2016. It placed Balcarras in the top 3% of schools nationally for student progress.

Sixth Form Examination Results 2017

GCE A-level Year 13 Students	Number of entries	A*	A	B	C	D	E	U
Applied Science	6	1	1	4	0	0	0	0
Art	18	8	6	3	1	0	0	0
Biology	37	1	9	13	7	7	0	0
Business Studies	33	2	7	15	6	3	0	0
Chemistry	23	0	4	8	8	1	2	0
Computer Science	12	0	2	5	4	1	0	0
D&T: Food	4	1	2	1	0	0	0	0
D&T: Product Design	11	0	1	5	2	2	1	0
D&T: Textiles	7	0	4	0	3	0	0	0
Drama & Theatre Studies	23	0	5	7	6	5	0	0
Economics	41	0	11	20	9	1	0	0
English Literature	32	4	11	11	5	1	0	0
French	5	1	3	1	0	0	0	0
Further Mathematics	6	4	0	2	0	0	0	0
Geography	31	1	11	10	7	2	0	0
History	47	1	10	14	16	6	0	0
Mathematics	54	8	12	21	8	5	0	0
Music	3	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
Physical Education	14	0	4	6	1	2	1	0
Photography	12	8	3	1	0	0	0	0
Physics	24	0	6	6	5	7	0	0
Politics	12	1	4	3	1	3	0	0
Psychology	33	1	4	8	13	5	2	0
Religious Studies	21	0	2	9	8	2	0	0
Russian	9	3	3	3	0	0	0	0
Spanish	10	1	3	0	2	2	1	1

Vocational Qualifications

	Number of entries	Dist*	Dist	Merit	Pass	Fail
Creative Media Production - BTEC	7	4	3	0	0	0
Cambridge Technical Diploma in Health & Social Care - double	7	3	4	0	0	0
Cambridge Technical Introductory Diploma in Health & Social Care - single	16	15	1	0	0	0
Cambridge Technical Subsidiary Diploma in Health & Social Care	2	1	1	0	0	0

GCE AS level Year 12 students	Number of entries	A	B	C	D	E	U
Art	29	14	12	3	0	0	0
Biology	66	14	9	18	6	11	8
Business Studies	45	4	12	6	13	5	5
Chemistry	51	12	5	6	10	6	12
Computer Science	3	0	0	0	2	1	0
D&T: Food	15	1	5	6	2	0	1
D&T: Product Design	13	3	4	1	5	0	0
D&T: Textiles	6	0	2	1	1	2	0
Drama	25	9	11	5	0	0	0
Economics	40	14	12	8	4	2	0
English Literature	47	14	19	11	2	1	0
French	20	6	5	6	3	0	0
Further Mathematics	13	8	5	0	0	0	0
Geography	40	21	13	2	1	2	1

History	58	17	9	19	10	3	0
Mathematics	64	27	6	8	8	4	11
Music	6	1	2	1	2	0	0

GCE AS level Year 12 students

	Number of entries	A	B	C	D	E	U
Physical Education	8	2	2	2	1	1	0
Photography	21	11	9	1	0	0	0
Physics	33	12	5	4	4	4	4
Politics	25	6	7	8	0	3	1
Psychology	71	14	7	16	10	11	13
Religious Studies	39	8	12	7	8	3	1
Russian	17	8	2	3	3	1	0
Spanish	15	5	2	1	1	4	2

Vocational Qualifications

	Number of entries	Dist*	Dist	Merit	Pass	Fail
Applied Science - Certificate	15	0	0	0	5	10
Creative Media Production - BTEC	14	9	0	4	1	0
Cambridge Technical Certificate in Health & Social Care - single	11	7	0	2	2	0
Cambridge Technical Introductory Diploma in Health & Social Care - double	13	6	1	4	2	0

Extended Project Qualification

Students achieved outstanding results in their extended projects this year. Topics were very broad and ranged from “Why is there so much money in Football?” and “LGBT Stereotypes in Disney films” as well as many scientific projects.

These results proved invaluable to the students in securing places at some of the top universities in the country.

Balcarras Sixth Form

Balcarras Sixth Form opened in September 1998. It is based in a superb purpose-built block on the school site. The great majority of our Year 11 students progress into the sixth form. The Head of Sixth Form is Assistant Headteacher, Mr Brett Jouny. Together with two Heads of Year, Adrienne Niblett and Mark Constance and 18 tutors, this constitutes the sixth form team, responsible for the care and well-being of all students.

Facilities

The sixth form building provides a wonderful learning environment. The majority of sixth form lessons are based in the block. There are twelve classrooms - including two science laboratories, a business suite, a superb drama studio and two ICT rooms. All computers in the block are part of the school network.

Private study areas, both fully equipped with ICT, are provided for both Year 12 and Year 13. The sixth form study areas are used by students for silent work when they are not in lessons. They are designed for this purpose, with individual study carrels and comfortable library furniture. Private study is supervised and is recognised by both staff and students as a crucial factor in the very high levels of achievement.

Students have a well-equipped common room (with excellent catering provision, sofas and a music system) for use at break and lunchtime.

Entry requirements and applications

Students are able to study a wide range of post-16 courses. Entry requirements vary from course to course, with consideration of the individual student's strengths and weaknesses helping to inform any decision.

The minimum requirement for entry to the sixth form is two grade 6's and three grade 5's in full GCSE's courses to include mathematics and English. Please refer to the Balcarras website for full details.

Many subjects will require a grade 6 at GCSE. Details can be found on the relevant subject page.

Students from other schools are welcomed into Balcarras Sixth Form.

The curriculum

Twenty-six A-levels are available. There are vocational awards: Creative Media, Health & Social Care, Food Science & Nutrition and Applied Science.

All year 12 students will do the EPQ.

Additionally students will be given the option to qualify for the Baccalaureate. The qualification is overseen by the AQA examination board and is aimed at those students who are both good academically and also participate in a number of events and activities beyond the prescribed curriculum.

The 'futures' course is followed by all Year 12 students. The course has modules on study skills, team building, problem solving, living on a budget, life at university, career opportunities and UCAS applications.

Once a fortnight all Year 12 students gather to listen to a guest speaker.

All students take part in sports on Wednesday afternoons. There are a number of activities on offer each term. We aim to provide enough variety so that all are happy to take part. Activities include football, netball, badminton, aerobics, swimming and trampolining as well as competition sports. Students wishing to arrange their own activity in the spring term are supported (some choose to play golf or squash).

The uniform

Sixth form students helped governors and teachers to devise a uniform that differentiates them from the rest of the school. There is a choice of three polo shirts (red, blue or ash grey). Each has the sixth form logo. Students can wear black or grey trousers or skirts and black or brown shoes and a black or grey jumper. Students may wear make-up and jewellery but are encouraged to be discreet. Uniform should be smart and formal.

Representation

The students are represented by the sixth form committee, which the students vote on in September. This meets to discuss any issues the students want to bring forward and to organise social events for sixth form students.

Contributing to the life of the school

Students are encouraged to take part in the wider life of the school. A large number act as learning support assistants or as paired readers to help younger pupils with their school work. Sport, drama, music, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and lively social events are all recognised as important aspects of the sixth form experience. The contribution of sixth formers to the House Music competition is particularly strong.

Extra-curricular activities

A wide variety of lunchtime and after-school activities takes place, including archery, drama, cookery, science, skiing, kung-fu, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and an EcoSchools club.

The PE department offers an extensive programme of sporting activities including cricket, netball, football, basketball, rugby, hockey, cross-country, athletics, rounders, tennis, swimming, kayaking, squash and badminton.

Music has a high profile at Balcarras. A wide range of instruments is taught: strings, woodwind, brass, drum kit, guitar, singing, piano and keyboard. There is an orchestra, a choir and various ensembles. School concerts take place at various points in the year.

In addition, a considerable range of opportunities is provided for educational visits and residential trips in Britain, Europe and beyond.

General information

Curriculum policies

Many school policies are to be found on our website. Please contact the school if you are unable to find specific information.

Under the terms of the Education Reform Act 1988, the school has established arrangements to consider parents' complaints about the school's curriculum and related matters. A copy of the full procedure for this is available for inspection at school.

The physical education course throughout all years puts great emphasis on relating sport to health and fitness. Team games are an important feature of the Balcarras programme.

The religious education course follows a syllabus which has a strong emphasis on Christianity. Students also develop an understanding of other faiths as part of our multi-cultural approach. Parents who wish to withdraw their children from religious education or religious worship should please notify the headteacher in writing.

Our PSHE programme is given considerable status and includes aspects of personal relationships, sex education, economic awareness and health and safety.

Sex education is provided for all pupils. We fully support the importance of families in providing knowledge of sexual matters, yet are mindful that some parents prefer this part of their children's development to be dealt with at school. The subject is handled carefully and with understanding and parents need have no fears about the quality of the programme. Details are available on request.

Facilities

The spirit of Balcarras is complemented by the physical environment and facilities found at the school:

925 computers, 7 computer rooms, 11 science labs, 4 art studios, SEN centre, design and technology centre, music suite, 2 drama studios, and a well-equipped hall all contribute to the superb facilities.

We are proud of our library. Staffed by a professional librarian, the centre embodies all that we are trying to achieve; pupils are helped to develop both traditional and new skills by using a mix of conventional resources and the latest technology.

Our sports facilities are no less impressive:

4 bay sports hall with fitness suite, gymnasium, playing fields, netball courts, tennis courts, cricket nets, an artificial cricket wicket, rugby and football pitches, pavilion and a floodlit astro turf pitch.

The new music facilities, due to be open Autumn 2017, will be wonderful and ensure music continues to be highly valued.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs & Disabilities

Balcarras welcomes students with a wide range of abilities and learning needs. Pupils with SEND are admitted on the same basis as all other children. It is an aim of the school to encourage all children to take part in the full range of activities, educational and social, on offer at the school. Physically disabled pupils have easy access to all ground floor areas. All upper floors are accessible by lift, with the exception of the top floor of the English block. We also do our best to ensure appropriate help is given to children whose learning and progress are a cause for concern.

Close liaison with our primary feeder schools enables us to identify and respond to SEND at an early stage. All subject areas make provision for children with special learning needs and are responsible for its development within the department. All teaching staff are provided with a profile of each child's particular needs and appropriate support strategies. The SENDCo and Heads of House work together to provide academic and pastoral support. Further tailored support is provided by the Individual Learning Department which comprises two specialist teachers and a large team of teaching assistants.

Library Resource Centre

With great emphasis now placed on individual study and coursework, the library plays a vital role in support of the curriculum. Housing books, newspapers, magazines and a wide range of non-book materials, the library is staffed by a qualified librarian, Mrs A Springer.

The library also has a suite of computers and a set of auxiliary laptops give pupils access to the school's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), the internet and the library catalogue which is networked throughout the school.

Careers

A planned, progressive programme of careers education and guidance is provided for all students in the school. It is delivered by the Head of Careers and the Careers Advisor, working in partnership with employers, education providers and external agencies.

When students leave Balcarras they will have received the appropriate information and support to enable them to progress to further or higher education, apprenticeships, training or employment.

The Careers department operates an open-door policy and parents and pupils of all year groups throughout the school are welcome to drop in for advice and guidance.

Careers provision is delivered through group activities, lessons and workshops for all year groups as well as individual guidance. Students in Year 11 are offered more intensive guidance, especially if they are undecided about their post 16 options. Work-related learning from Year 9 onwards includes visits to employers, speaker sessions, skills development workshops and a work experience programme in Year 10.

One-to-one guidance is offered through mock interviews, psychometric profiling (Morrisby testing), mentoring, coaching and support with making successful post-Balcarras choices.

A new Careers suite (adjacent to the canteen) is manned throughout the school day and has facilities for online Morrisby testing for up to 6 students at a time.

In the sixth form, the Futures programme, along with individual guidance from senior staff, prepares students for the transition from school to Higher Education, apprenticeships or employment.

The school itself offers an apprenticeship programme. Previous placements have included IT support, Teaching Assistant, Site Management, Music and Drama Technology.

PTFA

Parents automatically become members of the Parents, Teachers and Friends Association when their children become pupils at the school and new parents are warmly welcomed onto the committee. The association makes a significant contribution to the life of the school, organising a number of social and fundraising events where all members of the school community can come together.

Safeguarding

Balcarras is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils at the school.



Balcarras is an 11-18 Academy

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