

Sixth Form Applications: Advice for Year 11 Students applying to Balcarras

2025-26

Sixth Form Applications

Entry Requirements:

A minimum of 2 x grade 6 and 3 x grade 5

Maths and English (Literature or Language) grade 5 or higher

Key Dates:

Open Evening – Thursday 15th January

Application Deadline Friday 6th February

Sixth Form Application Process: 2026 Admissions

Attend Balcarras Sixth Form Open Evening (no need to make an appointment)
Thursday 15th January 2026, 7-9pm



Spend some time thinking about your post-16 options and the subjects you wish to study, review the materials available on the Sixth Form tab of the school website, utilise your subject teachers, tutor and Sixth Form team for advice



Fill in the Sixth Form Application Form (this will be live the day after the open evening)
Deadline: Midnight on Friday 6th February 2026



Attend a consultation meeting with a member of the Sixth Form team or SMT (the date and time will be emailed to you nearer the time)
March/April 2026



Following a successful consultation meeting, receive a conditional offer letter detailing grades required
May 2026



Attend Sixth Form Induction day
Tuesday 30th June 2026



Receive results and confirm to Sixth Form that you would still like your place
Thursday 20th August 2026



First day of Year 12, Balcarras Sixth Form
Wednesday 2nd September 2026

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Although the minimum basic entry requirement is 2 x 6, 3 x 5 (including Maths and English 5), many subjects have additional individual subject-specific requirements in order to secure a place on the course:

Art	6 in Art
Biology	66 in Science, or 6 in Biology, and a 6 in Mathematics
Business Studies	5 in Business Studies preferred. 5 in Maths and 5 in English.
Chemistry	66 in Science, or 6 in Chemistry, and a 6 in Mathematics
Computer Science	6 in Mathematics and a 6 in another IT qualification
Drama & Theatre studies	5 in both English Language and Literature / 5/C in Drama if studied at GCSE/IGCSE
Economics	6 in Mathematics and English Literature or Language. GCSE Business not required
English	66 in English Language and Literature
Environmental Science	55 in Science, and a 5 in Maths
Food Science	5 in Food Technology, Home Economics or Catering, or a 6 in Nutrition and any other DT subject
French	6 in French GCSE
Further Maths	8+ in Mathematics.

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Geography	6 in Geography
History	6 in History, 6 in English if History not studied at GCSE
Mathematics	7 in Mathematics.
Music	6 in Music and instrumental and performance skills to at least grade 5. (Expected to take lessons on their specialist instrument)
PE	6 in PE and minimum 55 in science. (If PE not studied at GCSE, evidence of a high standard in two sports)
Photography	6 in Art. If Art GCSE not taken, sketchpad / portfolio must be submitted
Physics	66 in Science, or 6 in Physics and a 6 in Mathematics
Politics	6 in English and / or History or RS
Product Design	6 in any Design Technology subject
Psychology	5 in Maths and English.
RS	5 in RS, 5 in English.
Russian	6 in Russian GCSE
Spanish	6 in Spanish GCSE
Textiles	6 in Textiles or Art GCSE

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If you are unsure of your GCSE target grade, or are concerned that your current level of progress will prevent you from being successful in your application, discuss this with your subject teacher, tutor and mentor as soon as possible.

A-Levels	A-level Equivalents
A*	Distinction *
A	Distinction
B	-
C	Merit
D	-
E	Pass
U	U

**Remember:
Food & Nutrition, and
Health & Social Care
are Cambridge
Certificate / B-Tec
courses, not A-levels.
They are A-level
equivalents, graded
Distinction* to Pass:**

As part of the Sixth Form you will:

- **Study 4 A-level subjects in Year 12 and sit terminal end-of-year assessments for these at the end of Year 12.**
- **Complete the Extended Project Qualification (AS-level equivalent).**
- **Use our amazing study facilities. These are also available before and after school. This is a rare resource, fully supervised and offering vital pastoral support, and key to our success.**
- **Participate in Games & Enrichment on a Wednesday afternoon (any sport you wish – within reason).**
- **Receive Speaker sessions once a fortnight to support your study skills and plan for your post-18 destinations beyond Balcarras.**
- **Wear our smart, but more casual uniform.**
- **Have a tutor who will be your base of contact for your entire time in Sixth Form.**
- **Have numerous opportunities to stretch and challenge yourself – The Law Society, The Hawking Society, Boost, DofE Gold, Paired Mentoring, STEM Ambassadors, Young Enterprise to name but a few!**
- **Have an incredibly enriching, fun and successful time.**

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Planning your option choices to facilitate post-18 Degree and career ambitions

When selecting your options, you do need to make sensible choices with regard to key subjects that have specific relevance to a planned post-18 career ambition.

However, the most essential criteria for your option choices must be if you can answer 'YES' to the following questions:

- Am I interested in this subject and the A-level syllabus content?
- Do I currently enjoy this subject at GCSE level?
- Am I mastering the skills and knowledge relevant to this subject?
- Do my choices offer me the breath and range of topics and skills that I want?
- Are my option choices going to assess me in a way that is likely to bring out the best of me?
- Are my option choices going to enable me to stay on course to pursue a future career in the professional field to which I aspire?

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New Subjects:

- **Economics**
- **Environmental Science**
- **Photography**
- **Politics**
- **Psychology**

If Balcarras does not offer a subject that you were keen to study (Creative I-Media, Criminology, Film Studies, Law, Media Studies, Sociology) you can still pursue elements of these in an EPQ if you choose to do so.

You must do your research!

- **Use Unifrog!**
- **Complete an Application Choices Matrix!**

Do not opt for any subjects unless you have thoroughly researched all that is involved.

They may not be as you expect.

If a subject you are very keen to study is missing from our current offer, come and discuss with Mr Leatherbarrow.

Do discuss with subject teachers and Heads of Department, and also Mrs Lewis and Mrs Towers in Careers.

Feel free to see Mr Leatherbarrow, or email any queries to: dl@Balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Post-16 Application Subject Choices Matrix

Enjoyment Which subjects do I most enjoy? Why?	Aptitude In which subjects am I progressing best? Why?	Aspiration Do I have particular career I aspire to? Most relevant subject choices (if any)?
Enjoyment Which subjects do I least enjoy? Why?	Aptitude In which subjects am I progressing least? Why?	Questions? Is there anything I want to ask the Sixth Form team?

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Other things to consider

When thinking your post-16 options, we understand that you do need to look at a range of sixth form providers. However, there are a few things we do want you to think about our sixth form offer:

Why am I expected to study four subjects in Year 12?

We firmly believe that our broader offer in Year 12 helps students keep their options open and ‘future-proofs’ good academic progress and wellbeing. By studying 4, with the view to dropping a subject into Year 13, students are able to continue with the three courses in which they are making most progress, most enjoy, and which are most relevant to future university and / or career choices.

Each and every year, @75% of students discontinue a subject which was NOT their original ‘fourth’ option!

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Other things to consider

When thinking your post-16 options, we understand that you do need to look at other sixth form providers. However, there are a few things we do want you to think about our sixth form offer:

Why doesn't Balcarras offer more subjects?

We believe that we have a very comprehensive range of academic subjects – with even greater access due to our offer of 4 subjects in Year 12, and modest entry requirements. However, we acknowledge that we cannot offer EVERY qualification. We do not offer a wide range of BTEC courses, for example, or T-levels. There are some notable A-levels which we do not offer currently are due to advice from university admissions teams as to their validity and usefulness:

- **Students looking to study law at degree level are advised NOT to study law at A-level for example.**
- **Similarly, the overlap between Psychology, Criminology and Sociology could potentially narrow post-18 options.**

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Other things to consider

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Why is EPQ compulsory?

We expect all Year 12 students to begin an EPQ for a multitude of reasons:

- **It helps students broaden their knowledge and skills;**
- **It helps students continue to pursue a subject interest which cannot be accommodated in their A-level choices;**
- **It is a fully accredited qualification, and many universities make more generous contextual offers for students who complete an EPQ at A*-B grade;**
- **University and employer feedback tells us that students who have completed an EPQ are more likely to succeed post-18 due to the independence and resilience the qualification engenders.**
- **If you like learning it is a fun and richly rewarding experience.**

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Other things to consider

When thinking your post-16 options, we understand that you do need to look at a range sixth form providers. However, there are a few things we do want you to think about our sixth form offer:

Why do Balcarras students have supervised Study, and not ‘frees’?

We believe that our Study provision is crucial on many levels:

- **Supervised academic study helps students to make a successful transition from GCSE to A-level, and to foster academic rigour and routine;**
- **Supervised academic study ensures that subject staff and our supervisors can work with students to help overcome issues linked to knowledge and understanding, the application of skills, organisation or meeting deadlines;**
- **Supervised study allows students pursuing practical subjects such as Art, Photography, Textiles, Product Design or Music to have more access to classrooms, staff and resources;**
- **Supervised study offers you much more contact with Sixth Form staff for pastoral support and careers guidance as and when relevant to you;**
- **By managing your work effectively in the day, it frees up time for sport, music, leisure and paid employment! Furthermore, it really helps build our community!**

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Other things to consider

When thinking your post-16 options, we understand that you do need to look at a range of sixth form providers. However, there are a few things we do want you to think about our sixth form offer:

**I don't want to go to university – so I should I be looking to study at Balcarras?
I want to go to an Oxbridge college - so I should I be looking to study at Balcarras?**

On both counts - not at all! The majority of our students - @ 85% - do make applications to UCAS in order to go on to join university courses, and each and every year we have a number who are successful in applying for high-profile and competitive Oxbridge places or medicine, dentistry and veterinary courses.

At the same time, we fully support all destination options – Degree Apprenticeships, Higher Apprenticeships, Foundation diplomas (such as in Art), Gap Year opportunities and employment.

Between tutor guidance in Personal Development, Boost and the Careers team you will be FULLY supported.

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Planning your option choices to facilitate post-18 Degree and career ambitions



Interested in Engineering?

Recommended A-levels:

Mathematics and Physics essential, and sometimes Further Mathematics too.

Product Design also highly recommended.

Interested in Business and Economics?

Recommended A-levels:

Economics. Mathematics very useful, as is Business Studies.



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Interested in Midwifery, Nursing, Social Care?

Recommended A-levels / BTECs:

Health and Social Care will provide the necessary experience for applications. Biology or Environmental Science also very important. Psychology a sensible accompanying option.

Interested in Physics:

Recommended A-level:

Physics. Mathematics also very important, Further Mathematics beneficial too.

Well worth considering other sciences like Chemistry.



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Interested in Medicine or Dentistry?

Recommended A-levels:

Chemistry is more important than Biology. Studying both would be sensible.

Mathematics is also absolutely essential.



Interested in Law & the Bar?

Recommended A-levels:

History, English highly recommended.

Politics, any MFL, and Economics all relevant and useful additional options.

(Law A-level disapproved by some universities)

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Interested in Psychology and Criminology?

Recommended A-levels:

Psychology.

Biology recommended, and strong maths GCSE required. English also recommended.



Interested in Veterinary Science?

Recommended A-levels:

**Much like with Medicine and Dentistry,
Chemistry, Maths, and Biology all strongly advised.**

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Interested in writing and Journalism?
Recommended A-level:
English, History, Politics, Philosophy & Ethics
(the former two in particular).
MFL subjects also well worth considering.



Interested in Physical Education, Sports Science, Physiotherapy?
Recommended A-levels:
PE. Sciences recommended, in particular Biology (these two A-levels go particularly well together).

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The Russell Group – a prestigious group of UK universities issued the following guidance a number of years ago:

If you are not sure about what course you want to study at university then traditionally, you would be encouraged try to choose at least two from the following list (known as ‘facilitating A-levels’) to keep your options open:

Mathematics

English Literature

Physics

Biology

Chemistry

Geography

History

Languages:

- **French**
- **Russian**
- **Spanish**



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Planning your option choices to facilitate post-18 Degree and career ambitions

Traditional ‘facilitating’ subjects:

Mathematics

English Literature

Physics

Biology

Chemistry

Geography

History

Languages:

- **French**
- **Russian**
- **Spanish**



This advice has been challenged in recent years, and students are increasingly encouraged to look for a balance of skills and knowledge that is appropriate.

Do not dismiss subjects solely because they are not on the traditional list of ‘facilitating’ subjects – do consider STEM, STEAM, SHAPE, and other options. Most of all, think about enjoyment and interest – if you don’t want to study something for two years, it is unlikely you will want a career in a field in which such knowledge and skills would need to be applied!

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Do what you ENJOY!

You will get better results and have more fun if you pick some subjects just because you enjoy them.

Get the balance right between academic rigour and enjoyment



**COMPLETE YOUR APPLICATION
FORM**

**THE LINK TO THE MICROSOFT
FORM IS ON THE WEBSITE – LIVE
FROM 10.00 FRIDAY 16TH
JANUARY 2026**



Still have questions?

Email Mr Leatherbarrow dl@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk, or cc@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk