



**BALCARRAS**  
From strength to strength

# NEWSLETTER

## Welcome from the Headteacher

Dear Parents,

The new school year has started well at Balcarras and I can't quite believe that we are now in sight of October half term. The summer seems like a distant memory!

As ever I want to start this first newsletter by congratulating last year's Year 11 and Year 13 on securing superb examination results. At A-level we achieved 60% A to B and value added that places us in the top 25% of schools nationally. The vast majority of students gained entry to their first choice option post 16.

At GCSE we achieved our best ever performance as a school. 80% of pupils achieved 5+ in English and maths and 44% of all entries were graded at 7+. The provisional Progress 8 score for value added is +0.83 which places us in the top 4% of all schools nationally. Everyone connected with this—pupils, staff, parents, governors—should take enormous pride in the level of this performance. We want the school to work for each and everyone of its pupils, no matter what their starting point.

Keep up to date on all our news:

[WWW.BALCARRAS.GLOUCS.SCH.UK](http://WWW.BALCARRAS.GLOUCS.SCH.UK)

## GIFT AID SCHEME DOMINIC BURKE HEADTEACHER

I would like to draw your attention to our gift aid scheme. It has been running for many years and pays for the school minibuses as well as providing funds for 'nice to have' projects around the school.

The next two years are forecast to be as challenging as we have ever faced financially so if you can help then please do. No donation is too small and I can promise you that we will put every penny to good use. Please click [here](#) for further information.

## TRIBUTE TO ROB DUNDAS DOMINIC BURKE, HEADTEACHER

The school was very sad to hear news that Rob Dundas has passed away. Mr Dundas worked on the site team at Balcarras from 2007 to 2017. He also led Badminton in the school until September last year.

Rob was incredibly hard working and used his knowledge as a builder to great affect for the school. He always had a superb relationship with his colleagues, and nothing was ever too much trouble. You knew that if you asked Mr Dundas to do something it would be done without fail. For a long time, he also organised the school's cleaning where his skills as an organiser and manager came to the fore.

Under Rob's leadership Balcarras became one of the leading schools nationally for badminton. In 2018 he took a team to the National Badminton Finals in Milton Keynes where they finished 6th. He was an inspirational coach, but his real skill was to encourage an enjoyment and love for the sport. I remember him once saying to me that the most important thing was to 'get the kids playing.' Once they were hooked then Rob would bring them on with some expert advice and guidance. The last time I saw him was at a special ceremony we had in February to recognise his contribution to sport in the school.

Rob was a warm, generous man with a big heart and a lovely sense of humour. The pupils he coached had great affection for him. That affection is shared by those of us who worked alongside him for so many years. We pass our sincere condolences on to his family and particularly to Nigel, Simon and Debbie who are all Balcarras alumni.

## SCHOOL POLICIES NEIL BAXTER, DEPUTY HEADTEACHER

As this is the first newsletter of the year, it seems a good time to remind parents of the school policies. These can be found on the school website:

Our School  
Policies

The school policies are designed to give parents an understanding of how the school operates and the expectations the school has for all the pupils. In particular the policies on

Behaviour	Drugs
Bullying	Child Protection/Safeguarding
Attendance	Single Equalities

might be of interest for parents to read. Some parents might find the other policies useful to read and understand.

We hope that all our expectations are by-and-large common sense: work hard, act nicely to other people and behave well and you will find your time at Balcarras enjoyable and successful.

## ATTENDANCE

NEIL BAXTER, DEPUTY HEADTEACHER

Please read the important information attached with this newsletter – “New DfE statutory attendance guidance - ‘Attendance Counts’.

## \*\*IMPORTANT – EMAILS FROM SCHOOL\*\*

Email is our major method of communication with parents and guardians. Please add this email address to your white list/trusted contacts/safe senders list as the majority of correspondence from school comes from this email address.

[12032@bromcomcloud.com](mailto:12032@bromcomcloud.com)

## ACTIVITIES WEEK 2025

LYN MASSEY, ACTIVITIES WEEK CO-ORDINATOR

Although this seems incredibly early to launch, there are so many things to choose from.

You might want to have a little look at the brochure for last year which can be seen on our website as to what is available.

We will be offering Theatre trips to both London and Bristol during this week for years 7-9 also, and information is to follow shortly.

As there is so much on offer each year, please take time to think carefully about all of your options. It is a very exciting week!

## BALCARRAS PRAYER GROUP

### Balcarras Prayer Group



Greetings from Balcarras Prayer Group!

We are a friendly, inclusive group of current and past parents, school staff and local people who want to pray for the life of Balcarras school. We meet six times a year to pray together, including prayer walks and socials. We would welcome anyone who wishes to join us and who feels called to support Balcarras in prayer. You may want to join us when we meet, or simply receive updates and prayer requests so you can pray in your own time. Please email me with your mobile number if you wish to be added to our What's App community.

As you may be aware, Balcarras Christian Union was started last year, led by Abbie Marsh, Youth Worker at CNC/Emmanuel. This has now moved to a Monday lunchtime in room 5A5, is open to all ages and aimed at any young person who wants to come along, regardless of faith. We eat lunch together, play games and discuss wider faith and life questions. It's a very welcoming, supportive and friendly group. Please let your young people know about CU, we'd love to see them on Mondays!

There is also a 'friends and parents of CKJS and CKIS' joint prayer group. If you are interested in finding out more, please contact the respective Head teachers who can provide contact details of the group leaders.

Clare Earl – Balcarras Prayer Group coordinator

Feel free to [contact me](#) at:

[Pengelly007@hotmail.com](mailto:Pengelly007@hotmail.com)

## SPONSORED WALK COMPLETED BEFORE THE RAIN

JACK GODDARD

On Friday 20th September the whole school enjoyed our annual sponsored walk in the beautiful Cotswold



countryside. Almost 1000 students and over 100 staff took part—with several brave souls running the course. If you've ever walked the course you'll know that it is pretty steep! It was a great event and we were fortunate to just avoid the torrential rain that was to follow!

We managed to raise £2,716 for local charities! Mr Constance (who organises charitable giving in the school) will contact students to ask them which charities they think we should support this year.

Make sure to check out the Balcarras website to watch the drone footage of the walk!

## EXAM INVIGILATORS

HEATHER HARRIS, EXAMS OFFICER

Required on an "on-going" basis  
£11.44 per hour + holiday pay

Balcarras School are looking to recruit more invigilators to join our excellent team. We particularly need people who are available in May & June as this is the busiest time during the external exams.

Internal exam periods are between 5 and 10 days in November, January, February, and April. It is preferable if you are available from 8.30am for morning slots and/or able to cover afternoon exams which typically finish around 3.30pm/4pm but could be later.

No experience is necessary as full training will be given.

### Application

For further information or to have an informal chat about the post, please contact the exams team on 01242 515881.

To apply, please download an application form and send completed application forms to [jobs@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:jobs@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk)

## SIXTH FORM NEWS

### Sixth Form - 2025 Admissions - Open Evening

We are delighted to announce our next Sixth Form open evening will be held on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2025 from 6-8pm. We welcome Y11 GCSE students from all schools and you do not need to book a space for the evening. Our application form will go live the following morning online. For further information on our admissions process and entry requirements, please click [here](#).

### Year 12 Ice Breaker

We have welcomed 240 students to the Sixth Form in Year 12 this academic year, with 82 students coming from external schools, including 2 international students. These students are integrated into Sixth Form life with a multitude of events and planning, including our annual Y12 Ice Breaker. Students work with their tutor groups to compete in various activities against their peers. The afternoon is always a lot of fun and a great way for the students to get to know their peers and for the staff to get to know the students. Congratulations to 12K, this year's Y12 Ice Breaker winners.



### Sixth Form Rugby

Congratulations to the Sixth Form boy's rugby team - the first fixture of the season saw a 26:19 victory over Bournside. Well done to the whole team and to the men of the match: Ed Hill and Tom Hopkinson

### Sixth Form BBQ

Our annual Sixth Form BBQ was hosted whilst the lower school enjoyed their sponsored walk on a sunny Friday at the start of term. This year, we cooked and served almost 460 Sixth Form students! Whilst we ate delicious burgers and our now famous "tater tots" we enjoyed music from Mr Armstrong and Sixth Form students and enjoyed some sunshine

(narrowly missing the storm!). The BBQ is a lovely opportunity for students to mix with their peers, make new friends and enjoying some relaxation time out of the classroom for the afternoon.



### Young Enterprise

Each year Mr Goddard leads a team of students in the Young Enterprise initiative. Students work in groups to develop, produce and market a product of their choice and then compete against other teams from around the country. Last year, one of our teams made it to the Young Enterprise final, attending the event in Cornwall, and were runners up! This year, we have launched the enrichment opportunity to Y12 students and have been blown away with over half of the year group wanting to participate! Watch this space for more information on the exciting products the teams develop.

### A-Level Results

The 2023-24 A-Level Results were excellent and a great reflection of the hard work of our out-going cohort. 30% of all grades awarded were A\*-A, 60% A\*-B and 83% A\*-C. Of our cohort of 204 students, 163 (92% of applicants) secured places on university degree courses, including places at Oxford and Cambridge, and on medicine, veterinary medicine and dentistry courses. In addition to that, a number of Balcarras Y13 students secured Degree Apprenticeship and Higher Apprenticeship places at DES, MOOG, Renishaw, Kohler-Mira, Spirax-Sarco, Hazelwoods, Barnett-Waddingham and Safran.

For any Balcarras alumni intending to make UCAS applications in 2024-25 the Sixth Form team will be able to offer support. Details on alumni support can be found [here](#).

### Maths Challenge

Last week, 120 Sixth Form students participated in the annual Maths Challenge. This is a 90-minute challenge which is open to all A-Level maths students and this year, all participated! Well done to all of those students that participated.



## PTFA UPCOMING EVENTS



### CLOTHES SWAP

Friday 18th October  
7pm - 9.30pm  
Balcarras Gym

**WHAT CAN I DONATE?**  
Ladies & secondary school girls clothing, including jewellery, accessories, shoes & bags.  
Please ensure clothes are clean & in good condition, with no holes etc.  
Please drop all donations to school reception between Monday 7th - Wednesday 16th October or bring on the night.  
All proceeds to the PTFA

**TICKETS**  
£10 - [Buy on Eventbrite](#)  
£12 - on the door  
£5 - Secondary school age children



Scan for tickets!

Bring a bag! There is no limit to how many clothes you can take home with you!

There will be a bar with drinks and snacks available to buy.

Tickets for the Clothes Swap can be purchased here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/clothes-swap-tickets-1021933609937>

Thank you to everyone who came and supported the PTFA Comedy Night last Friday.

### Upcoming dates for the diary:

The PTFA will be providing refreshments after the Carol Service at Holy Apostles Church on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> December. The Carol Service starts at 7pm.

The PTFA will also be providing interval drinks and a raffle during the school production running from Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> December to Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December.

## BALCARRAS ALUMNI

### JACK KILBY



Since leaving Balcarras I have been studying medical sciences at the University of Worcester. To help us with our degree and applying for jobs and postgraduate degrees we are encouraged to find work placements or shadowing opportunities where possible. Recently this has included an exciting placement with Mrs Ford's mum, local Hepatology Consultant and Liver specialist Dr Hollywood at Cheltenham and Gloucester Hospitals. On this placement I got to be really involved and as a result, learnt a lot. This placement involved shadowing Dr Hollywood in clinics, on the wards and even got to watch some endoscopic procedures performed by Dr Hollywood and her colleagues, As I am considering surgery as a possible avenue this was really something that interested me and as you can see I even had to get into scrubs! Dr Hollywood also found me other colleagues in other departments to shadow during my week with her such as in radiology and this was also interesting. Overall, I am extremely grateful to both Mrs Ford and Dr Hollywood for the opportunity, I thoroughly enjoyed it and I encourage other people to reach out and find themselves shadowing and placements whatever their area of interest may be as it can really benefit your studies, help build your knowledge and confidence as well as looking great on a CV.

## RECYCLING

### JON PEARCE, ECO CLUB



This year our school managed to renew their green flag status. We have a committed Eco group that look at ways to reduce the impact of our school. Lately we have been looking at ways to recycle more items. Most pupils know that each classroom has a paper recycling bin. However, in the last year we have added a clothes recycling bin by the beeches gate. We also have put a battery recycling bin in the library to dispose of old batteries. These contain chemicals that can be harmful if sent to landfill. We also have an old pen recycling scheme, each department has a shoe box where the pens are collected. Then with the aid of Rymans in town these are recycled into new pens. If you are keen to get involved in making our school greener come along to 7A6 on a Tuesday lunchtime and join the Eco club.

*Photo: our Green flag*

## NEWSLETTER



The newsletter will now be distributed by email and available to view on our VLE (Firefly) as well as on the school website.

It is incredibly easy and will save the school a lot of paper and the planet a lot of trees!

If you would still prefer a hard copy, please contact Karen Adkins  
[ksa@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:ksa@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk)

Follow us on X (formerly Twitter) @balcarras and Facebook, Facebook.com/BalcarrasSchool for updates and news about school life and events.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dominic Burke", with a horizontal line underneath.

Headteacher





Department  
for Education

Dear parents / carers

New DfE statutory attendance guidance - 'Attendance Counts'

There has been growing national concern regarding declining school attendance rates across the UK. In response, the Department for Education has introduced new statutory guidance, effective from August 2024, aimed at reducing term-time holidays and unauthorised absences, and supporting families whose children are struggling to attend.

'Support First'

As the DfE notes, '*Improving attendance is everyone's business*', and it is important that your child's school, work together in partnership with you, your family, your child, and the wider community.

The new 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' Guidance emphasises a 'Support First' ethos, and recognises that '*the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families... [It] is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.*'

If you are concerned about your child's attendance, then please contact your child's school as soon as possible so that barriers to attendance can be understood, and appropriate support can be put in place to support you, your family, and your child to prevent further absences.

Formalising and intensifying the support

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, it is possible to work with partners, including the local authority, to formalise and intensify the support.

As part of the measures introduced, if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences within 10 school weeks, the pupil's parent(s)/carer(s) may receive a 'Notice to Improve' notification sent via email on behalf of the school and issued by the local authority (LA). Each day of absence is recorded as two sessions (morning and afternoon). Unauthorised absences include:

- unauthorised absence (where there is no reasonable circumstance for the absence taking place),
- arriving late after the register has closed,
- or a combination of these with holidays taken during term time

These 10 weeks can span different terms, academic years, and even different educational settings, such as transitions to secondary school or in-year school changes. For instance, if your child misses 3 days of school

for a holiday in July (6 sessions) and is late after the register closes on 4 occasions (4 sessions) between September and October, you may be issued a 'Notice to Improve' notification.

The 'Notice to Improve' notification will set out the expectations and period notice for the improvement of attendance such as 'no further unauthorised absences'. Should the expectations not be met in the improvement period, then a Penalty Notice may then be requested by the school and issued by the LA to each parent/carer responsible for the child.

Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, may result in a Penalty Notice. In this instance, a 'Notice to Improve' notification will not be issued beforehand.

The penalty amount is increasing to £160 from September (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days for the first offence). If a parent receives a second penalty notice within a rolling three-year period, the fine is £160 and there is no option to pay the fine at a reduced rate.

Parents with parental responsibility, and adults residing with the child, including for example, stepparents who have day-to-day responsibility for the child, may be fined, and this applies to each child who is absent. For example, if two adults take two children out of school, the total fines would be £640 (reduced to £320 for a first offence paid within 21days).

If a Penalty Notice is not paid within the time limits set out in the letter to the parent, the Local Authority may proceed the case to court.

We recognise that these Penalty Notices may be unpopular with families, but it is important to inform you of these changes promptly.

Nationally, Headteachers are:

- not permitted to approve term-time holidays except in genuinely exceptional circumstances, and
- to consider each application for a leave of absence individually before making our decision.

The law clearly expects Headteachers to enforce these penalties strictly.

The new policy also states that all schools must consider issuing Penalty Notices if the criteria are met. This is a national statutory process and will be followed by all English state funded schools.

You should read carefully your school's attendance policy which will be published on their website.

If you would also like more information, please visit the LA's public attendance pages after the 19th August: [Attendance and absence from school | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

The primary goal of these measures is to ensure that children do not miss out on their education. Every lesson is a crucial part of your child's learning journey, and frequent absences can significantly hinder their progress. Thank you for your continued cooperation in supporting your child's education.

## VACANCIES

All vacancies are advertised on the Balcarras Trust website:

<https://www.thebaccarrastrust.co.uk>



### Teaching Assistant (Qualified or Unqualified)

To start as soon as possible after successful interview

Unqualified Grade 3-4 £13,435.08 actual salary (FTE £22,737)

Qualified Grade 6-8 £14,118.15 actual salary (FTE £23,893)

5 hours per day, Monday to Friday (9am - 3.35 pm), Term-time only + 5 INSETS  
There may be an opportunity to take on additional paid duties at break and/or lunch time.  
Part-time applications will be considered.

Balcarras School, part of the Balcarras Trust is looking to appoint an enthusiastic teaching assistant to join our excellent team.

You will work in a large team supporting our children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Full training will be given to the right applicant and relevant experience / qualifications to carry out the role will be considered.

You will assist in the educational and social development of young people at an important stage in their lives. You must have a caring demeanour, good communication skills, and be able to work flexibly with fellow professionals to support the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs, including students with physical disabilities.

Ofsted assessed Balcarras in 2005, 2009 and 2014 as "Outstanding" in every category.

#### Application

Further information including a job description can be found in the Applicant Pack [www.thebaccarrastrust.co.uk](http://www.thebaccarrastrust.co.uk). To apply, please complete an application form and send completed application forms to [jobs@baccarras.glouchs.sch.uk](mailto:jobs@baccarras.glouchs.sch.uk)

Closing Date for applications: Wednesday 16th October 2024, 9am

Interviews to follow shortly after.

For further information about the post, please contact the school at the above e-mail address.

*The Balcarras Trust is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. This role will involve regulated activity with children. We particularly welcome applications from underrepresented groups including ethnicity, gender, transgender, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion. Please also read the Recruitment Selection and Disclosure Policy within "How to apply" which includes our policy on recruiting ex-offenders. All posts are subject to an enhanced DBS check and receipt of two satisfactory references.*



### Teacher of Drama - Maternity

Required for 1st January 2025

Full time, part time may be considered

We are looking for an enthusiastic and inspirational Drama teacher who will contribute to our future success.

The ability to teach English to KS3 would be an advantage.

Ofsted assessed Balcarras in 2005, 2009 and 2014 as

'Outstanding' in every category.

Applications from both prospective ECTs and experienced teachers are welcome.

Excellent induction and further professional development is available.

Please read the letter to applicants and applicant pack for further information.

#### Application

To apply, please send completed application forms to [jobs@baccarras.glouchs.sch.uk](mailto:jobs@baccarras.glouchs.sch.uk)

Closing Date for applications: Friday 18th October, 9am

Interviews to follow shortly afterwards.

For further information about the post, please contact the school at the above e-mail address.

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*Get stronger, fitter and improve your posture*

## *Pilates by Katie*

NEW! Group class starting 11 September

Pavilion Hall, Balcarras School, GL53 8QF

Wednesdays 6.30 – 7.30pm



£14 per class, block booking

For more information and to book, please contact Katie:

[Katiejbaxter@icloud.com](mailto:Katiejbaxter@icloud.com)  
07812 807 560

Booking essential please