



BALCARRAS
From strength to strength

NEWSLETTER

Welcome from the Headteacher

Dear Parents,

We have made it to Christmas!! It has been a lovely term at Balcarras and the last few weeks have been particularly special. The carol concert and the school production of City of Angels were great events and will live long in the memory. I would like to congratulate the 180+ pupils who were involved in City of Angels—it was a sublime performance and played out to packed audiences all week.

The carol concert the week before had 136 pupils directly involved. It too was a truly joyful occasion and I can't remember ever feeling more proud of the school than I did that night.

This has been a long term and I get the sense that everyone is very tired and ready for a break. I would like to pay tribute to the young people of Balcarras. They continue to be a pleasure to work with and for. I would also like to thank you—the parents—for your unstinting support for the school.

At the carol concert the Chamber Choir sang Carry the Light by Andy Beck. It was one in a long line of exceptional performances during the evening. The piece starts with the following beautiful words:

I will carry the light,

Like a candle that shines in the night,

I'll be your beacon that's burning bright,

I will carry the light.

I genuinely hope that the light of Christmas shines for all our children and families this festive season. My very best wishes to you all.

Dominic Burke

Keep up to date on all our news:

WWW.BALCARRAS.GLOUCS.SCH.UK

YEAR 12 GEOGRAPHY RESIDENTIAL

JON PEARCE, GEOGRAPHY



We set off around 8:00am, with tired eyes, to Dorset, for a weekend of insightfulness and adventure. Our first stop was the famous town of Lyme Regis, known for its history of palaeontology and coastal landscapes. We discussed how features, that we learnt in class were formed and got to explore and find lunch before heading back on the coach. The next location was Chesil Beach, a shingle barrier beach that is a depositional landform. The area is known to be a high energy coastline, great for windsurfing and other water sports. We were there to learn how to accurately measure rocks and pebbles, skills that will be great for when we choose our fieldwork project in the summer. Exhausted after a competition of rock stacking and attempting to not lose our booklets due to the winds, we clambered back on the bus, ready to

rest and relax at the Swanage Youth Hostel. We spent the evening, first with dinner at the hostel, then at the arcade on the 2p machines, winning tickets and attempting to win prizes on the games.

Day two was a busy day, filled with walking up hills, ice cream and bowling. In the morning, we fuelled ourselves with a wonderful breakfast, knowing we needed energy for what was to come. The sight of the Jurassic coast is something unbeatable, especially Lulworth Cove. Its cliffs capturing the sun and the waters blue, like a tropical beach (yet slightly colder). Before our walk up the steep hill, we were treated to an ice cream, which motivated and energised us while crawling up the hill. At the top the views did not disappoint, the views spanned across the horizon and your eye could not miss the sight of the magnificent Durdle Door, the well-known arch made of Purbeck limestone, a strong resistant rock. We ate lunch then, set off again back to Swanage, to measure the impact of groynes (coastal defence) along the bay. We talked about how these groynes, have helped locally (due to interrupting longshore drift), but how it is negatively affecting the sediment cell further along the coast. We learnt some more recording techniques, which will help us when recording our own fieldwork. In the evening, we went bowling, competing against our friends to see who would get the first strike.

The weather was not on our side for the last day; however, it made it more eventful. Walking to the sand dunes (at Studland Bay) so we could analyse the psammosere (succession of sand dunes), where we jumped and dodged waves. We used many methods to measure our data which made this day very informative. Before departing we had a picnic – in the rain- while discussing the whole weekend – an insightful adventure. Overall, this weekend was very enjoyable but also useful and informative. Thank you so much to the geography department for organising this trip as the whole of Year 12 geographers are very grateful for all the experiences you gave us.



CLIMATE DEBATE AMELIE ROWE



Members of the Balcarras Eco club took part in a Climate debate with other Cheltenham schools at the Council Chambers in Cheltenham

The day began with a short recap and agreement of the day's agenda, and afterwards an opening speech to begin the conference from Azerbaijan, the host country of COP29. All of the countries/schools gave their opening statements on how they were affected by climate change and their goals for sustainability. Balcarras represented the USA and consisted of Amelie R, Amy P, Bluebelle L,

Delilah H, Matthew J and Thalia O-J. We found that the first part of the day, the mock conference and debate, the most fun. During the debate there was a lot of questions targeted at us because of the newly elected president of the U.S however since he won't be in office for a few more weeks, we were still representing the Biden administration.

Just before midday we had our breaktime. By then we were massively behind but managed to get back on track towards the end. In this section of the day, we looked at cities, energy, oceans and 'forests and food'. Here we collaborated with Uganda and Brazil. The Uganda team was very spirited and were passionate about the U.S being the enemy, even going as far as threatening to 'drill baby drill' (Uganda threatened to drill their oil if they weren't compensated to leave it in the ground.) if we didn't invest in their sustainability.



After lunch we had a look at a marketplace of local charities and organisations that work in sustainability, representing everything from local park, Cheltenham's Clean Air plan, the councils 'Net zero' targets, through to wildlife and re-wilding projects.

The final event of the day was a Q and A session with a panel of visitors who work in sustainability, it gave us the chance to see the careers that people have in this field and some of the latest projects they were working on.

Amy Pallister even managed to get interviewed by BBC points west on the event and her thoughts on the importance of taking action to combat climate change.

CHELTENHAM OPEN DOOR



Thank you to those that donated to the collection at the carol concert in aid of Cheltenham Open door – we raised over £700! If anyone would still like to donate, this can be done via the QR code.

What will my donation fund?

£5	Monthly hot drinks parcel for a Guest
£10	Monthly toiletry pack for a Guest
£13	Daily laundry cost for our Guest Centre
£20	Monthly food parcel for a Guest
£30	To provide for one day's breakfast for all Guests
£50	Materials for podiatrist session
£80	Pet food for a week for our Guests' pets
£100	One street kit for a Guest (tent, sleep bag, thermos etc)
£150	Lunch & drinks for a day's service at our Guest Centre



CHELTENHAM EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

GAVIN JOHNSON

The Cheltenham Educational Partnership - which now includes all the Cheltenham secondary schools [both state and independent] - was established a few years ago with the specific aim of collaborating resources to offer students exciting opportunities that they wouldn't normally get within their own individual school environments. And it is fair to say that so far this year Balcarras students have made the very most of the many and varied opportunities on offer!

Already this year we have come out on top in both rounds of The Great Debate with two different Year 12 teams. The first round saw a team drawn from the Geography department, going up against a team from CLC, proposing the motion that 'This house believes that the winter fuel allowance should be extended not restricted'. The second round (celebrating the recent US election) saw a team drawn from Philosophy and Ethics, this time going up against a team from All Saints, opposing the motion that 'School boards should not be able to ban books from libraries or the curriculum'. Excitingly, the highlight this year for the debaters will be a trip to Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford who are going to be hosting the final round.

One of the biggest 'suppliers' of students this autumn has been the English department. A group of Year 7s, 8s and 9s have been taking part in this year's Young Poets 'Slam Poetry' challenge which sees them developing their performance poetry skills via a number of workshops. This year the program will culminate in the summer with an evening event at The Parabola Centre. And not to be outdone, a group of Year 11s have been making the most of a series of talks - 'Brush Up Your Shakespeare' (hosted by Cheltenham College) - which have been running over the last few months. And all this has been on top of VOICEBOX, which each year forms part of the Cheltenham Literature Festival, where this year the Balcarras students got to produce a podcast with Jordan Stephens from Rizzle Kicks.

The Y10 D&T Textile students are also currently heavily involved in their own challenge. The Young Designers 'Wearable Art' project is seeing them transform a selection of preloved clothing into unique, eye-catching and sustainable garments which will then be exhibited at a presentation evening at The Wilson Art Gallery next summer. After Balcarras hosted the first workshop, the second was recently held at Cheltenham Ladies College

where the professional costume designer running the program was joined by another CEP ex-student who is currently a designer at the legendary tailors Turnbull and Asser.

And last, but certainly not least, the Science Department have again nominated a number of Y10s who have recently started work on this year's STEM Mars Rover Project which, over a series of workshops, will see them design and manufacture their own robot, designed to explore the Red Planet.

As the year goes on there will of course be updates, via the website and newsletter, on the progress of the various projects. And this will also include details about some one-off events coming up in January including an Astronomy evening and the CEP headline event, this year being hosted by Balcarras: The Horizons Council. This will see students from all the CEP schools coming together, along with a number of local high-profile individuals from education, commerce, police and local council (including the local MP Max Wilkinson) to discuss some of the issues - and hopefully propose some solutions - that younger people in Cheltenham currently face.



The first workshop (hosted by Balcarras) for the Young Designers 'Wearable Art' Challenge 2025!

ATTENTION, YEAR 11

AMY SPRING WALLIS & AL SPRING WALLIS, YEARBOOK CO-ORDINATORS

The Yearbook pages are now live on the VLE. Please visit Resources > Student Zone > Yearbook and start uploading your photos; voting for awards; and writing up all the 'teacherisms' that have plagued you since Year 7. Parents and guardians, there is a page for uploading baby photos and 'first-day-of-Year-7' photos, so please get involved too! We look forward to seeing what you come up with...

SPORTS NEWS PE DEPARTMENT

District Cross Country Success

The 2024 District Cross Country Championships took place earlier this term and once again Balcarras students performed amazingly!!

With a dozen schools in the district represented Balcarras finished top of the tree in terms of school positions across all races.

In a fantastic set of results the Year 7 Girls finished 1st, the Year 8 and 9 Girls finished 1st and the Year 10 and 11 Girls also finished 1st!!! The Year 8 and 9 Boys finished 1st, the 10 and 11 Boys 2nd as well as the Sixth Form Boys and the Year 7 boys finished 3rd.

Considering the high quality of runners across the district this is truly an astounding result... well done to all of those who took part.

County Cross Country

Moving on from the District success, all students who finished in the top 12 of the District went on to race at the County Championships held at Newent in December. Over 25 Balcarras students were chosen to represent Cheltenham District in this event which brings together all of the best runners in the whole of Gloucestershire.

Special congratulations to Olivia Avery in Year 10 who won her race and is now County Champion!!

This amazing achievement was also backed up by several excellent runs from other students in all age groups who have been selected to run for Gloucestershire in the Regional Finals in the new year.

Monty Wilkins Yr 8, Patrick Paul Yr 10, Ben Yates and Reuban Parker both Year 12, Lola Newport-Black Yr 7, Rosie Atkins Yr 9 and Evie Avery Yr 10. Well done to you all!!!

County Champions!



A huge well done to the U13 hockey team for winning the County Tournament. The girls played outstandingly well and were undefeated all day! The girls won last year's County tournament too, which hasn't been done at Balcarras before! Well done, Girls! Keep up the good work!

U13 Squad: Isla Potter, Kiki Price, Ella Mason, Matilda Lucking, Freya Fossella, Beth Hill, Belle Hacker, Isla McRitchie, Zara Pledge-Giampaglia, Annabelle Vaughan and Leen Salahaddin.

U12 Hockey Success!

The U12s have had a great first season at Balcarras. They won the U12 District Tournament and got through to the semi-finals at the County Championships! Their commitment to training really paid off! Well done, Girls!

U12 Squad:

Tilly Danaher, Claudia Carroll, Charlotte Pritchard, Florence Boughton, Betsie Underwood, Lucy Vaughan, Maddie Watkins, Clodagh Hodnett, Lauren Lazenby and Lola Newport-Black.

Girls Football

U14 Football Success!

Congratulations to the U14 girls football team for winning the district football tournament. The team were undefeated throughout the whole tournament and beat Bournside in the final. The team are now through to the next round. Well done girls!

U14 Squad:

Kira Wray, Rosie Atkins, Maia Evangeli, Eva Allen, Naomi Kelly, Jasmine Croft, Kiki Price, Bonnie Shirlaw, Alana Tucker, Ella Mason, Hope Lamb and Amy Pallister.

U12 Football Success!

Congratulations to the U12 girls football team for coming second in the district football tournament. The team will go through to the next round as runners up.



U12 Squad:

Tilly Danaher, Charlotte Pritchard, Florence Boughton, Betsie Underwood, Lucy Vaughan, Maddie Watkins, Katie Pratten, Bella Hutchins, Emma Sheer, Lauren Lazenby and Lola Newport-Black.

SIXTH FORM OPEN EVENING – 2025 ADMISSIONS

Please join us for our open evening on Thursday 16th January 2025 from 6-8pm. There is no need to book a place and during the evening you will be able to tour the school with student tour guides, visiting A level subject areas and meeting with both Sixth Form students and A level teaching staff. In addition, there will be talks given by Mr Leatherbarrow, Head of Sixth Form, at 6.20pm, 7pm and 7.40pm in the main school hall. We welcome all families with students currently in Year 11, both currently at Balcarras and at other schools.

If you have any questions or are unable to attend the evening, please contact cc@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk. Further information about the application process for Sixth Form can be found on our [website](#).

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

HAYLEY DAVIES, HEAD OF PSHE

On Thursday 21st November, 50 pupils from the 6th Form delivered a 2-hour Personal Development session to Year 7. The 6th formers completed a 3-day 'Boost' training programme beforehand, which equipped them with the skills and knowledge to deliver a session on emotional regulation and self-care. The Year 7s had a great time and hopefully learned the importance of being kind to themselves and building resilience.

CYBER FIRST GIRLS COMPETITION

STEPHEN COOPER, HEAD OF COMPUTING

This November, our school participated in the annual CyberFirst Girls Competition. Suffice to say we had some amazing teams enter and it was a real showcase of the problem solving, resourcefulness and determination of our Year 8 girls. The teams achieved remarkable scores, reflecting their hard work and computational thinking skills. Beyond the competition, we hope this experience has sparked an interest in Computer Science and Cyber Security among the competitors, inspiring them to consider exciting and impactful careers in these growing fields.

A huge well done to all who took part.

ACTIVITIES WEEK 2025

LYN MASSEY, ACTIVITIES WEEK CO-ORDINATOR

Tickets are now available for the two shows in London. Lion King the musical on Wednesday 9th July and Starlight Express at Wembley Stadium on Thursday 10th July 2025. The cost of these tickets are £48 each and available to purchase on Scopay. This includes coach travel to London, shopping at Westfields, and matinee performance at the theatres. Returning back to school around 8pm.

PUPILS WEARING HELMETS

Just a reminder that pupils travelling to and from school by bike should be wearing helmets. We have received a few complaints from the public about Balcarras pupils not wearing helmets whilst cycling. Thank you.

PTFA NEWS

Upcoming dates for the diary!

Friday 24th January – Second Hand Uniform Sale
5.30 - 7pm

Friday 24th January is the annual PTFA Quiz.

Keep the date free, more information to follow in the new year on how to book!

CHRISTMAS QUIZZES

Do have a go at the Christmas Quizzes just beneath this newsletter from GCHQ and Wicked!

The answers to the GCHQ challenge are available on their website:

<https://www.gchq.gov.uk/news/gchq-christmas-challenge-2024>

SCIENCE OUTREACH

LAURA THOMSON, HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE



Early this term Mrs Thomson visited Naunton Park Primary School to teach the students about dissolving, crystallisation and evaporation. Sixty year 5 students dissolved aluminium potassium sulphate in warm water to create a saturated solution. They then filtered the solution and left the water to evaporate. A week later they were able to study the crystals formed. The year 5 students also enjoyed going out to the playground and took on the role of being a solute or a solvent. The solvent then ran around dissolving the solute!

MUSIC NEWS

JANE WATTS, DAN ARMSTRONG, MATT HOWELL

Well – it's been a whirlwind of a term and, to be honest, we haven't come up for air yet!

The Carol Concert on December 4th was enormously enjoyable – 'enormous' being the operative word. We had a record number of students taking part – in fact it worked out at about 9.5% of the entire Balcarras student population!

From the very outset (opening with a brilliant brass and organ fanfare, written by Mr Armstrong) there was a wonderful sense of occasion. The readings were great – and Rev Ashley Collishaw made everyone (including a record number in the congregation) very welcome. Instrumental ensembles of every shape and size, jazz bands, orchestras and no fewer than six different choirs (including Staff Choir) got us all into the Christmas spirit.

We are very fortunate in the Music Department to be supported by a fabulous team of Visiting Instrumental Teachers and our thanks go to Victoria Burge, Nicola Hopkins, Nathan King, Tracey Vacher and also George Douglas for their help in putting the evening together. We also welcomed back 'Y14' trumpeter Matthew Chestney, who wowed us all.

Mr Armstrong, Mr Howell and I would really like to thank all the students and families who helped this year's great traditional Balcarras event to be such a success. Huge thanks also to Suki and Rob in Reprographics, the PTFA and The Food Tech Department (and all members of staff who had a hand in the mince-pie-making – as it were!). Also, we'd like to thank Andy Cadogan and Site Team for their help in moving 200 chairs and countless music stands, amplifiers and large instruments! Even I got in on the act as well by driving a fully loaded minibus – yes, my feet do just about reach the pedals!

Finally – a big thank you to Mr Burke and SMT, without whose support we couldn't put on such a large-scale event and who lead from the top in demonstrating to our student's enthusiasm for and appreciation of all the performing arts. As a Music Team, we appreciate that greatly!





The standing ovation and accompanying tumultuous applause are still echoing throughout the school (and in our heads!).

You can read elsewhere in this newsletter a more detailed account of this truly extraordinary production, and the commitment and breathtaking teamwork displayed by the entire cast and crew... but just a few words from me as Musical Director;

This show is without doubt one of the most challenging we have ever taken on...and the sumptuous musical score is harmonically complex and demanding for singers and orchestral players alike! It would pose a challenge to full-time conservatoire students – and

yet our amazing Balcarras students demonstrated a level of musicianship far beyond their years!

Congratulations to all of the 'singing principals' who delivered their numbers with musicality and authority! Special mention to the LA LAs (some of whom are only in Y8) for their amazing command of four-part harmony scat singing and very sophisticated jazz harmonies! (and a special shout-out to guest tenor Mr Niblett and guest bass Mr Godfrey)!



Finally – the orchestra! This year, there were twenty-six of us – and they managed to accompany with great sensitivity as well as shine in all the joyous, bravura-filled bits! All year-groups from Year 8 upwards were represented and there was a real spirit of band camaraderie throughout the rehearsal process and throughout the run of four performances!

Thank you to alumni Lola Williams, Matthew Chestney and Elian Moisey for their great contributions on Bassoon, Trumpet and Double Bass and to Sarah Chestney (Bass Clarinet) and Mark Harmer (Synthesiser) for their wonderful help.



We are so lucky to have Tracey Vacher (Percussion), Nicola Hopkins (Flute), George Douglas (Guitar), Nathan King (Trombone), Matt Howell (Keyboard Bass) and the irrepressible Dan Armstrong on Drum Kit! Our fifteen production orchestra students have great role-models!

I hope everyone involved gets a well-earned rest over Christmas after this!

Jane Watts

Exam Successes

Congratulations to the following and their teachers:

Mrs Tracey Vacher – Piano – MTB board

Vaaria Gately (Y9) – Grade 2 – Distinction

Daisy Fraine (Y10) – Grade 1 – Merit

Phoebe Campbell (Y8) – Grade 4 – Pass

Emily Moriarty (Y8) – Grade 3 – Pass

Catherine Mather (Y11) – Grade 1 – Pass

Isaac Costa-Hall (Y11) – Grade 6 MTB Piano Distinction

Mrs Tracey Vacher – Trinity Piano

Eddie Atkins (Y11) – Grade 3 – Merit

Mr Nathan King – Trinity Trumpet

Matthew Fawcett (Y13) – Grade 7 – Merit

Mrs Jo Haslam – ABRSM Violin

Bluebelle Lee (Y9) – Grade 5 – Merit

Tom Egelton (Y9) – Grade 5 – Merit

Eliza Lacey (Y10) – Grade 3 – Pass

Mrs Victoria Burge – ABRSM Cello

Imogen Cadogan (Y8) – Grade 4 – Merit

Sophie Thornley (Y10) – Grade 5 – Pass

GIRLS FOOTBALL AT BALCARRAS

LAURA THOMSON

What a fantastic term for year 7-9 Girls Football! The girls have trained every week, come rain or shine and have shown great enthusiasm for the sport. During the term they played friendlies against HSL and St Edwards and did not lose a match. They were also very successful at the district tournament and did not concede a goal for the whole tournament.

On top of all this success, Balcarras has been recognised by FA Girls and Move More! The school has been awarded an 'Equal Access Trophy' for being only 1 of 16 schools (out of 60) in the Cheltenham and Tewkesbury Partnership to offer equal access to girls in curricular and extra-curricular football in the 2023-2024 academic year.

To celebrate their success, the students had a fun and festive Santa football training session to finish of the term. Fun was had by all (see photos)!



BAUBLE COMPETITION
JENNY SWANPOEL, HEAD OF DT



Grace Young
7S1

Chloe Woodward
7G1

Saskia Matile Moore
7F1



Holly Bodenham
9G2

Lily Nguyen
8O2

Sofia Leach
8S1



Nancy Moore
7G2

Freya Bodenham
7G1

Ewan Donaldson
7S2



Lucy Wilson
9S2

Kitti Luck
9F1

Bella Griggs
8S1



Ava Bayston
11S2

Orla Janes
11F2

Matilda Hume
11F2



Poppy Foulkes
11S2

Madison Lackey
10F2

Emma Olding
10O2



Environmental Science



It has been another exciting term for our Environmental Science A-Level Students! On top of their engaging lessons and exciting practicals, they have followed COP29 with great interest, attended a 3-day residential in Wales to carry out field work and have listened to a lecture by a world renowned mangrove scientist!

Residential 2024!

Year 13 Environmental Science students attended a 3-day residential at FSC Margam Discovery Centre.

Day 1 the students collected biotic and abiotic data from an actively managed sand dune system in Swansea. After dinner they completed data analysis on the data to look at correlations and species richness.

Day 2 the students carried out a rocky shore survey at Bracelet Bay. They studied macro algae richness, limpet size in intertidal zones and niche identification of top shells. In the evening, they carried out statistical analysis on distribution and variation of species. That evening the students also walked around the grounds and identified different species of bats using detectors.





Day 3 the students measured the carbon sequestered by two contrasting woodlands: coniferous and deciduous. They then returned home, feeling very tired and caught up on their sleep!



Mangrove Lecture

Nathan Thomas, a world-leading mangrove research scientist, senior lecturer at Edgehill University and previously a NASA scientist for several years came to talk to our year 13's about his research with Mangroves and how he found himself working with NASA space missions. The talk was both fascinating and informative from a curriculum and career perspective. It was enjoyed by both students and teachers! The topic of Mangroves is cross-curricular, and we were also joined by year 13 biology and geography students as well as some year 11's.



Merry Christmas and remember, a toy may be fun for Christmas, but plastic is forever!

7O1 SCIENCE

Laura Thomson, Head Of Environmental Science

7O1 was set the challenge to present plant and animal cell models in an exciting and memorable way, and they did not disappoint! There were posters, models, lift the flaps and even cakes! These are just a few examples!



FOOD NEWS

CATH SAUNDERS, HEAD OF FOOD

This year has been a bumper year for Christmas Cakes. The Food department along with Year 10 have made a total of 80 Christmas cakes. This has provided much joy and excitement for the pupils who have demonstrated enormous creativity and skills when making their cakes. We think you will agree they are fantastic!



The Royal Institution Christmas Lectures 2024



Something to watch over Christmas.....
 This year's Royal Institution Christmas
 lectures are all about food.
 This will be of interest to some of you and
 to all our pupils – please see below

The 2024 CHRISTMAS LECTURES will be on BBC Four and iPlayer 29, 30 and 31 December at 9pm.

In this year's Christmas Lectures, Dr Chris van Tulleken delves deep into our guts – to reveal the revolutionary latest science around what happens inside our bodies when we eat. He investigates how food has fundamentally shaped human evolution, uncovers the importance of our microbiome – as the extra 'organ' we didn't know we had – and asks how we can all eat better in future, for the sake of our own health and the health of the planet.

Chris will reveal how what we eat can have a massive effect on both our bodies and our brains. He'll bring the science to life through a series of fact fuelled demos, special guest appearances, festive food hacks, and a healthy dose of self-experimentation.

Chris will reveal how he believes we can repair this broken relationship with food – investigating what we should be eating and joining forces with expert chefs and scientists of all kinds to cook up some weird and wonderful sustainable future foods.

Featuring animal, as well as human guests, this year's lectures will provide plenty of surprises, shocks and some truly gross moments. And there'll be startling facts to chew over about how our modern food is made and what it's doing to our bodies

Christmas sweet containers

We should be encouraging you to eat healthy over Christmas, but we know that is not always achievable! However, should you manage to eat your way through lots of Heroes, Celebration. Quality street or Roses, please can you encourage your child to bring in any left-over containers (empty!) to the food rooms, as we use these for pupils who forget their containers.

Finally, from Mrs Ford, Mrs Denyer, Miss Clements and myself we would like to thank you for your continued support in providing ingredients for your child's lesson. We hope you have enjoyed the products they bring home, remember that all our recipes are on the vle – should you wish them to practice their skills over Christmas, and please don't forget that washing up is a skill too!

Merry Christmas!

ROTARY YOUNG CHEF COMPETITION

ADRIENNE FORD, TEACHER OF FOOD



On Wednesday 11th December Balcarras hosted the first annual Cheltenham North heat of the Rotary Young Chef Competition, our two entrants Jasmine 12M and Serena 10F1 had to plan and carry out a healthy 2 course meal for 2 people to cost less than £18. All had to be cooked from scratch and completed within 2 hours. As well as showing of their considerable skills in the kitchen with beautifully presented, delicious dishes they also had to produce detailed costing sheets and time plans to show their intentions. The evening went well with both girls wowing the judges by opting to make a home made pasta dish with freshly rolled pasta and a pudding filled with fruit to help improve the nutrition in the dishes. The deliberations were long as the judges tasted and agonised over every detail and with the points

tallied, they found there were only a couple between them and the final announcement was that Serena had taken the win this time and Jasmine was runner up. Serena will go on to compete again at the next round which is the regional heat at Cotswold school in January and we wish her all the best of luck to keep moving forward through the competition.



The judges were Rob Knight from Orchard Catering and Rosanne Cole from The Rotary Club, we were also joined by Gwynne Tucker Brown as Rotary Club of Cheltenham North's joint chair of Youth and Community who emailed after the event to say:

Thank you so much for initiating Young Chef with our Rotary club. It was such an opportunity to see what our young are capable of with good teaching. Both Rosanne and I were amazed at the confidence and competence with both Jasmine and Serena accomplished their meals. We look forward to the next round. Gwynne Tucker Brown



Mrs Saunders and I are extremely proud of both students who represented Balcarras school and Food in particular excellently and look forward to running this competition again next year with other schools from the local area coming to compete against us. If you think you have what it takes to win please make sure you take part when the competition is advertised in 2025!

GCSE & A-LEVEL EXAM CERTIFICATE

HEATHER HARRIS, EXAMS OFFICER

A Reminder - Certificates for A-level and GCSE students that took exams Summer 2024 are now in the main school reception for collection – please be advised we do not post certificates.

HOWEVER, Balcarras are in possession of many uncollected Examination certificates going as far back as 2018. We have also discovered in the archive's certificates going as far back as 2003.

In accordance with the examination boards, we will no longer be retaining certificates beyond 12 months. Any unclaimed certificates will be stored securely for at least 12-months, then destroyed confidentially.

If you believe we may still be in possession of your examination certificates, please click on the following link and complete [Exam Certificate Collection](#), (control click to follow link) once in receipt we will do a search and inform you accordingly to arrange collection. Certificates will not be posted; however, they can be collected by anyone on your behalf. During busy examination times it may take us longer to respond to enquiries.

If we have not heard from you by the end of the year (2024) we will begin to destroy all unclaimed certificates. The awarding bodies do not replace certificates, you can however request a statement of results to replace certificates, of which there is a charge.

Please **DO NOT** complete the form for exams taken Summer 2024. Certificates for exams taken June 2024 will be retained by the Centre until Jan 2026 allowing students plenty of time to collect. We would love to reunite as many certificates with their owners as possible.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN A CAREER IN TEACHING?



**ARE YOU INTERESTED
IN A CAREER IN TEACHING?**



**JOIN US
FOR OUR
SECONDARY TEACHER
TASTER DAY**

 **Thursday 23 January 2025 - 08:45am - 1:45pm**
Balcarras School, East End Road, Charlton Kings,
Cheltenham, Glos GL53 8QF

**To reserve your place, please email
ts-hub@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk**

YOUNG ENTERPRISE TRADE FAIR

JACK GODDARD, ENTERPRISE

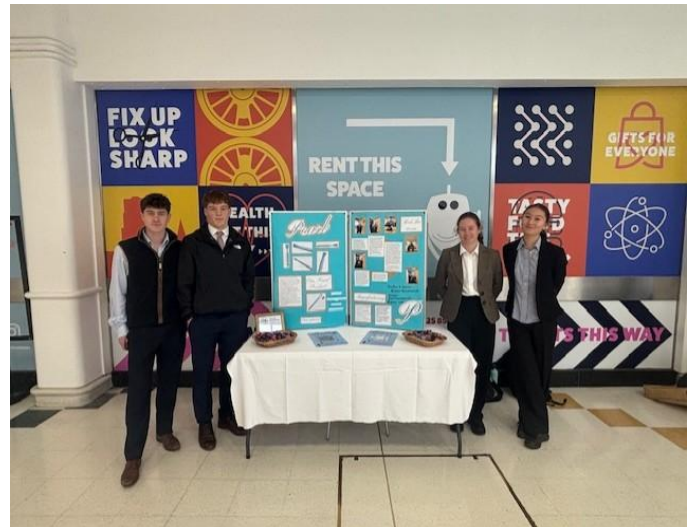
On Thursday 12th December both Balcarras Young Enterprise teams made the trip to Swindon, Brunel Shopping Centre to take part in the Young Enterprise Trade Fair. This was a chance for both teams to engage with the general public and have a chance to sell their product and learn from the experience.

Both teams did brilliantly and won 5 out of the 8 awards, including 'Best Overall'. Plus, lots of sales were made! Next stop, the regional finals in March.

If you are interested in purchasing any items from the Young Enterprise Teams, the links are below.

Mist: <https://mistfragrance.com>

Pearl: www.pearlbrushes.co.uk



EASYFUNDRAISING

Balcarras School



Just letting you know that Balcarras School are now registered with easyfundraising, which means you can raise FREE donations for us every time you shop online. Over 7,000 brands will donate to us when you use easyfundraising to shop with them – at no extra cost to yourself! These donations really mount up and make a BIG difference to us, so we'd really appreciate it if you could take a moment to sign up and support us. It's completely FREE and only takes a moment. You can find our easyfundraising by clicking [here](#).

Thank you so much!



Tell me a story



Over winter break, write a 500 word short story using the prompt *Winter*

The stories will be collected in a unique anthology showcasing the best of Balcarras



Please email Ms Kelly (MCK) your final drafts by **January 13th**



See VLE for more information and inspiration



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

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

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher



Christmas Opening Times

Monday 23rd	Salvation Army	11am-1pm
Tuesday 24th	Elim Church	11am-1pm
Wednesday 25th	CLOSED	
Friday 27th	C3, The Pavilion St. Paul's Church	10am-12pm 11am - 1pm
Monday 30th	CLOSED	
Tuesday 31st	Elim Church	11am-1pm
Wednesday 1st Jan	CLOSED	
Friday 3rd Jan	C3, The Pavilion St. Paul's Church	10am-12pm 11am-3pm



Charlton Pharmacy
39 Lyefield Road West
Cheltenham
GL53 8EZ
01242 522207
charltonpharmacycheltenham@gmail.com

10 December 2024

Dear Mr Burke

Re: Pharmacy First – an NHS service being offered from pharmacies across England for children and adults

With absence and attendance being a high priority for primary schools, I am writing to let you know about an NHS service which pharmacies across England are offering for children (as well as adults) called Pharmacy First.

What is Pharmacy First?

This service enables children and adults to get quick access to healthcare advice as they can walk in to a pharmacy and access the service (some pharmacies also offer the service remotely as a video consultation). The person will then be offered a consultation with a pharmacist in a private consultation room. This service takes away the potential delay of having to wait for a GP appointment and may help ensure children and staff get well and back to school as quickly as possible, potentially positively impacting attendance rates.

The service supports primary school aged children in the below age groups who need help with:

- **Earache** (aged 1 to 17 years)
- **Impetigo** (aged 1 year and over)
- **Infected insect bites** (aged 1 year and over)
- **Sore throats** (aged 5 years and over)

The service also supports older children and adults (so will be applicable to your staff and parents/carers of the school children as well) in the below age groups who need help with:

- **Earache** (aged 1 to 17 years)
- **Impetigo** (aged 1 year and over)
- **Infected insect bites** (aged 1 year and over)
- **Sore throats** (aged 5 years and over)
- **Shingles** (aged 18 years and over)
- **Sinusitis** (aged 12 years and over)
- **Urinary tract infections** (UTIs) in women (aged 16 to 64 years)

The pharmacist will provide advice and, if clinically necessary, offer an NHS medicine to treat the condition (these medicines are supplied free of charge to children under 16 years, with the normal [NHS prescription charge rules](#) applying to people aged 16 or over). The pharmacy will then send an electronic message to the person's GP surgery so their health record can be updated.

Should the pharmacist be unable to help, they will direct the person to their GP surgery or other health professional as appropriate.

Please feel free to share this information with parents via any of your communication channels.

A summary of the service is available as an [animation](#) and more information can also be found at nhs.uk/thinkpharmacyfirst

Resources to promote the Pharmacy First service to parents/carers and staff

We are keen to raise awareness of the service to parents/carers of young children, as well as school staff so that if anyone has symptoms of any of the forementioned conditions, they are aware that they can access advice

quickly and potentially obtain medicine (if clinically appropriate) from a pharmacy. We would therefore be keen to work with you to see how you could promote this service within your school.

Community Pharmacy England, who represent community pharmacy owners in England, has created a suite of resources for use by schools; you can use any that would suit your methods of communication with parents/carers to raise awareness of this important service. Resources include:

- Downloadable posters which can be displayed in reception/waiting areas or staff rooms;
- Downloadable flyers which could be included in school bags or left in reception/waiting areas;
- Digital screen options which could be played if you have a digital screen in your reception/waiting area;
- Template news stories that could be included on your school website or in newsletters; and
- Template letter to email out to parents/carers highlighting the Pharmacy First service.

All of these resources are available at cpe.org.uk/infopharmacyservices for you to view. If you would like to discuss promotion of the service further or have any questions on the service, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

James Payne
Superintendent Pharmacist

Public Hearts and Cry, a national charity, to help offer free ECG screening for 14-35-year-olds in Gloucestershire. Each week in the UK, 12 young people aged between 14 and 35 die from sudden cardiac arrest. On 28 JAN 2025, with Cardiac Risk in the Young, up to 100 young people will have an ECG to detect potential heart conditions.

Bookings can be made here <https://lnkd.in/eCPTwKm7> - the password is HEARTS2025

FUNDED HEART SCREENING PROGRAM FOR 14-35 YEAR OLDS

What is it?

A heart scan is effectively another term for a cardiac ultrasound that is useful for identifying cardiac abnormalities such as problems with the valves of the heart or a hole in the heart.

Is it safe?

Yes, an ElectroCardioGram (ECG) is performed by a qualified medical professional from Cardiac Risk in the Young using 12 leads to the body. These capture the electrical activity of the heart and transfer it to graphed paper. C-R-Y also ensures that there's always a female chaperone with any male who is performing ECGs on females. Parents are encouraged to attend with their teenagers/young people.

Why do I need an ECG?

To check your heart is healthy.



Find out more www.c-r-y.org.uk/category/faq/
For any general information please contact us on 01242 371 999

FUNDED HEART SCREENING PROGRAM FOR 14-35 YEAR OLDS

28 January 2025
The School House Café
Cheltenham GL50 4EZ



Every week in the UK, at least 12 young people die from sudden cardiac arrest

PRIORITISE YOUR HEART It's as easy as ECG

Scan to book or go to:
www.testmyheart.org.uk/private
Password: **HEARTS2025**



Cheltenham Public Hearts Defib Campaign & Cardiac Screening are not for profit community initiatives.