



BALCARRAS
From strength to strength

NEWSLETTER

Welcome from the Headteacher

Dear Parents,

Another half term has just whizzed by. It is lovely to reach the sanctuary of February half term. I'm on the school ski trip to Norway alongside 114 pupils and several staff. It is a tough job but someone has to do it!

It has been a very sad week at Balcarras because on Monday we learned that our dear friend and former colleague Kevin Clancy had passed away. Please see the school's tribute to him below.

It has been a busy 6 week half term and I am sure everyone is ready for a rest. The pupils have been super as ever and I want to pay a particular mention to Year 11 and Year 13. Things are gearing up towards the summer and their attitude and approach has been excellent.

I hope you all have a nice February half term.

Dominic Burke

KEVIN CLANCY DOMINIC BURKE, HEADTEACHER

This week we received the very sad news that Kevin Clancy had passed away.



Kevin taught science at Balcarras from 2002 until retirement in 2018. He was a highly dedicated educator who always wanted the very best for his pupils. In addition to teaching, for many years he also ran the school's careers provision. In this role he worked tirelessly to ensure that everyone had access to strong careers advice and was particularly tenacious in advocating for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Kevin was universally popular in the staffroom at Balcarras—indeed he was a stalwart—always there at break laughing and joking. He believed strongly in the value of camaraderie and he made it his business to celebrate people and to support them. For many

years he acted as a Trade Union representative and always endeavoured to support his colleagues as best he could.

He was a mainstay of the Balcarras staff football scene and was a formidable opponent at full back. He was a regular on the Balcarras School ski trip and also took part in several expeditions to far flung places.

Kevin had a wonderful sense of humour and an infectious laugh. He was a great storyteller and his anecdotes always had people in stitches. He was a warm and generous man who always had time for other people.

He will be greatly missed by all of us who knew him at Balcarras. We send our condolences to his wife Lesley and to his three daughters—Kerry, Ellen and Anna, who are all Balcarras alumnae. Kevin was a highly devoted teacher but it was always clear that his love for his family was the defining dynamic of his life.

SQUASH COMPETITION SIMON CRITCHLEY



On Thursday 30th January Sam Terrell, Thomas Naylor, Sam Heys, Will Heys and Aidan Metcalf represented Balcarras School in the second round of the National Schools Squash Competition at Lemington Spa Squash Club.

The level of squash was exceptional and there were some very close matches with the boys narrowly missing out on progressing to the next round.

POLLUTION MONITORS

JON PEARCE, ECO CLUB

We have teamed up with Cheltenham Air Quality Education Projects to install two pollution monitors at Balcarras.

The Balcarras Eco club have installed two pollution monitors to record the air quality around the school. This is an initiative created by the Cheltenham Air Quality Education Projects. A number of schools are taking part in this project to look at air quality of our local area. To see the live feed click here. <https://map.cheltenham.space/>

The coordinator is Hannah Leatherland from Cheltenham Borough Council. She came into school and helped the Eco club build two outdoor air monitors. These use Rasperry Pi processors to take air quality readings for Particulate matter (PM1, PM 2.5, PM4, PM10), which comes from the burning of fossil fuels. In Cheltenham this is predominantly from car exhausts and wood burning stoves. The sensors also record NOx gases, which come from Car exhausts, along with VOC's which can contribute to Photochemical Smog.

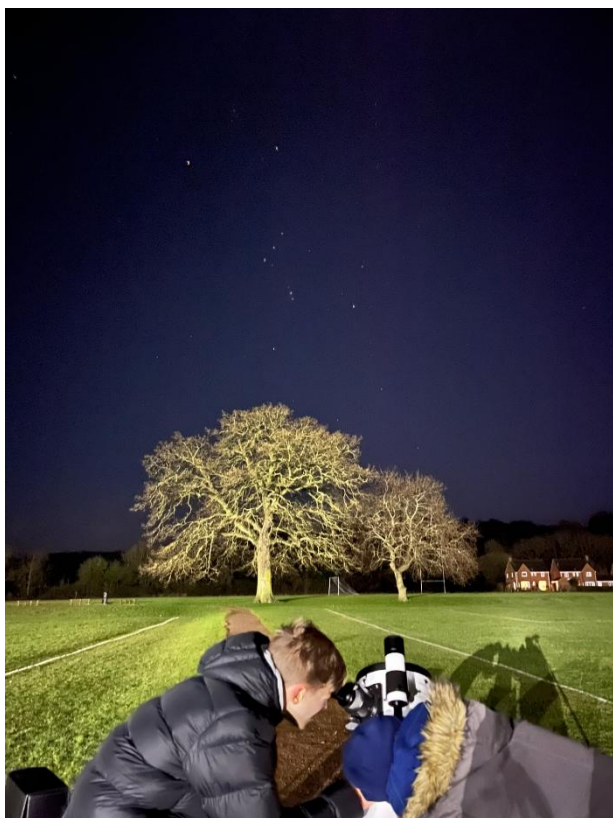
If you would like to know any more about this project, come along to the Eco club on a Tuesday lunchtime in 7A6.

There is an article on the school website for more info

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/news/?pid=3&nid=1&storyid=1193>

ASTRONOMY CLUB

PAUL GODFREY, TEACHER OF SCIENCE



On the evening of Thursday 6th February, we had perfect viewing conditions to see many objects in the sky. Our astronomy club used the school's Dobsonian reflector telescope and some impressive binoculars to take in the views of Saturn, Jupiter and its moons, nebula in the constellation of Orion, Mars and Venus.

The best view was that of the half moon, when illuminated from the side the craters are shown in sharp relief. It's rare to see so many objects so clearly in the sky. We also found Uranus which can't be seen with the naked eye, but could be seen with our telescope.

All pupils involved thought it was awesome to see these sights 'for real' and I couldn't agree more. If you have a pair of binoculars at home, use them to look at the moon and if looking at Jupiter you'll see its moons too!

YEAR 11 PROM

INGER BOURNE, PASTORAL SUPPORT SUPERVISOR

My name is Inger Bourne and I am organising the Balcarras Year 11 Prom, taking place on the 10th April at the Doubletree Hotel. We want all students to attend the Prom, so they can celebrate their time at Balcarras School. We know that some families need financial support to attend this event, so we would appreciate any support you can offer to make this happen.

Tickets are available to buy via Scopay. **Tickets must be purchased before 13th March.**

Please consider overpaying for tickets on Scopay. This enables us to subsidise tickets for other students. We would love you to sponsor the Prom, so we can provide a brilliant photographer and DJ for the night, as well as decorations and a photobooth. If you would like to sponsor the event, you can do this through Scopay as well.

We want this to be a fantastic night for all Year 11 students, so please support the event if you can. Thank you.

D OF E BRONZE

JAMES BUTLER, D OF E BRONZE CO-ORDINATOR

A reminder that the next DofE Bronze meeting is Tuesday 25th March where students will submit their completed expedition routes.

Students will now have completed 2 of their 3-month sections. Students must contact their assessors to ask them to submit the assessors report.

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!



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



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



Thursday 3 April 2025 - 08:45am - 1:45pm
Balcarras School, East End Road, Charlton Kings,
Cheltenham, Glos GL53 8QF



To reserve your place, please email
teachertraining@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

PILATES

MARK CONSTANCE, ASSOCIATE ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

We have been delighted that Karie Turner (one of our parents) has been hosting a staff Pilates class this term in school. It has proved so popular that we are carrying on next term. The staff that have signed up for this class have found it hugely beneficial. Thanks to Karie for boosting the morale of our staff! Details of her classes are in community notices at the back of the newsletter.

CHES

WILL ROTHWELL

Balcarras Chess team are through to the next round of the regional competition



On Wednesday the Balcarras chess team travelled to Chipping Campden School to play their next round match after qualifying for the regional competition following victory at Bristol Grammar School.

It was a hard fought game and went down to the wire, but Balcarras emerged victorious following a sensational move from Jonathan Cartwright to win the final game on board 2.

Congratulations to the following players who will now battle it out in the next round for a place at the nationals.

YEAR 10 PRACTICE INTERVIEWS 2025

JILL LEWIS, CAREERS ADVISOR

In January year 10 students had practice interviews with professionals from a variety of industries, the feedback from the interviews has been very positive with lots of praise for the students.

These are just some of the comments from the interviewers:

'As always lovely, motivated and kind students' - Rachael (Cirencester College)

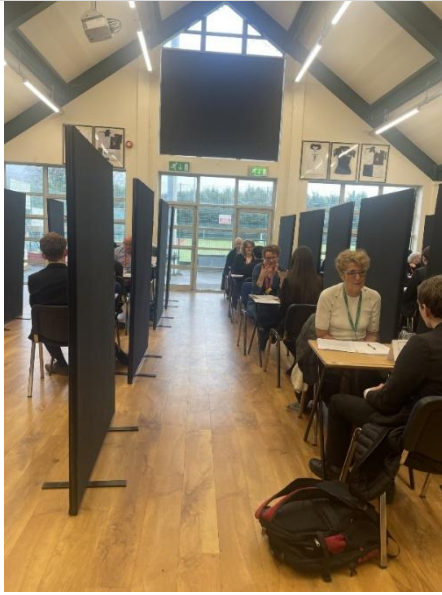
'Great Experience the students are a credit to the school' - Ruth (Legal and General Insurance)

'I was highly impressed with the calibre of students I interviewed today' - Ed (Hazelwoods)

'So impressed with the pupils, really well prepared and ambitious, Excellent!' - Sara (Cirencester College)

'Thank you! It was great to meet so many kind and intelligent young people' - Sabina (Haremi Publishing)

Well done Year 10!



YEAR 11 SKILLZONE TRIP MIA DODDS, HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE

SkillZONE is an interactive life size village where children and adults can learn to keep themselves safe at home and in the community.

We took part in scenarios looking at road safety, fire safety, safety in the home and making a 999 call. We were also able to reenact real life contexts such as a bus journey, a shopping experience, railway & level crossing, a dark alley scenario and steps to wellbeing.



PTFA

Upcoming events:

Balcarras Comedy Night – Friday 7th March 2025

Comedy night is always a great evening of live comedy. Click [here](#) to buy tickets.

We have a new event taking place on Friday 21st March – “Balcarras Race Night”

Come join us at Balcarras School for a night filled with excitement and friendly competition. Get ready to cheer on your favourite horses as they race to the finish line. Each team will be given "money" to place bets - our "bookies" will be ready and waiting to hand out your winnings. No previous horse racing knowledge needed - our hosts will help you through the night. There will be prizes for the team who ends the night most in profit. It's going to be a night to remember, so gather your friends and family for a lively, fun-filled evening. Come in a team of up to 6 or join up with others on the night.

Click [here](#) to buy tickets.

Looking ahead, please do add Midsummer Music to your diary – Friday 20th June 2025.



BALCARRAS SIXTH FORM 2025 ADMISSIONS



Balcarras Sixth Form 2025 Admissions Key Dates:

- Wednesday 5th February - application deadline
- March/April - consultation meetings
- May - offer letters issued by mail
- Tuesday 1st July - induction day
- Thursday 21st August - GCSE results/
confirm your place
- Tuesday 2nd September - first day of Y12

*Please follow the QR code for further
information including our entry requirements and
information
on the courses we offer.*



Sixth Form Open Evening/ Application update:

Following a very successful open evening in January, we have now received over 500 applications for 2025 admissions into Sixth Form. Now that the application form is closed, we are beginning to schedule the consultation meetings for the students that have applied. For Balcarras students, these meetings will take place during the school day with a member of the Senior Management team, the date and time will be confirmed to the students by their tutor. If you have any questions regarding the Sixth Form application process, please don't hesitate to get in touch with the Sixth Form team.

Boost Group:

We are delighted to announce that our 2026 UCAS application Boost Group has now officially launch and this week has seen a series of dinners with the students and members of the Sixth Form team along with Mr Niblett, the Boost Group co-ordinator. During these dinners, students in Year 12 who have expressed an interest in wanting to pursue a degree at Oxbridge or Russell Group universities or pursue a career in medicine or veterinary, meet at a local venue and enjoy a wonderful dinner and great conversation. Mr Niblett invites some of the students to give a speech on a pre-prepared topic and then these topics are discussed throughout the evening. In addition, Mr Niblett has arranged for a Cambridge professor to visit Balcarras this week to talk to the students in the Boost Group.

Psychology Visit to Gloucestershire University

In support of our forensic psychology modules, Sixth Form psychology students visited Gloucester university's Francis Close campus for a Psychology and Criminology taster day. We enjoyed engaging lectures on extremism and misogyny, as well as environmental sociology. However, the highlight of the day was a visit to the 'crime house' where we became police investigators trying to solve a murder mystery.



Year 13 Prom Update and Leavers Hoodies

We are delighted to announce our 2025 Y13 Prom will be held at Manor by the Lake on Thursday 3rd July. Tickets will be on sale shortly through Scopay priced at £35 per person, this includes a formal two course meal, welcome drink and the evening's entertainment. Further details will be shared with Y13 students and their families over the coming weeks.



Our Year 13 Student Leadership Team have been absolutely outstanding this year and the traditional leavers hoodies were designed, ordered and delivered by the 1st January! Our students are proudly wearing them around school.

University Applications

We are very pleased to announce that 204 students have submitted their UCAS application along with 5 alumni students. We offer support throughout the Sixth Form journey to all students for their university application as well as offering practice interviews and supporting students with writing their personal statement. Oxbridge places were announced last week and we are delighted to announce that 4 of our students have been offered places at Oxford University and another student has been offered a place at Cambridge university.

Debates



Our weekly inter-tutor debate season kicked off at the start of January, the first topic up for debate was the 'There is no such thing as 'Free Will'. We have been gaining an amazing turn-out for the twice-weekly debates at lunchtime and it's been wonderful to see some Y11 students attending alongside our Sixth Form students and staff. Last week saw the final debate of Round 1, with 13C vanquishing their valiant opponents, 13E. We will continue the debate season after the half term.

YEAR 8 SCIENCE & GEOGRAPHY TRIP



This term, Year 8 students visited the Science Museum and the Natural History Museum in London.

At the Natural History Museum, students learnt about how the movement of the tectonic plates shape our world in the volcanoes and earthquakes exhibit.

Following this they entered the dinosaur exhibit to see Dippy the Diplodocus. Did you know, Dippy used to be in the entrance hall of the museum!

After lunch, the students visited the Science museum where they discovered all about the history of the UK's involvement in the space race.

A great day out was had by all students and a big thank you to the geography and science departments for organising the trip!



80s BINGO NIGHT A HUGE SUCCESS! JACK GODDARD, TEACHER OF BUSINESS

Last Friday, the Young Enterprise team transported parents, teachers and the general public back in time with their fantastic **80s Bingo Night**. The event, held in the school hall, was packed with neon outfits, classic tunes, and plenty of competitive bingo fun!

The atmosphere was electric as participants enjoyed multiple rounds of bingo, with exciting prizes up for grabs. From retro snacks to a lively 80s music playlist, the team ensured everyone had a great time.

Most importantly, the night was a massive success in raising funds for the Young Enterprise team. Thanks to ticket sales, refreshments, and generous donations, the team raised an impressive amount that will go towards their business projects.

A huge well done to the Young Enterprise team for their hard work in organising such a brilliant event. We can't wait for next year! A massive thank you to the Balcarras PTFA for supplying the bar for the evening!



PE NEWS

MARK HARVEY, HEAD OF PE

Year 8 & 9 County Champions



The Year 8 & 9 girls are the county champions for 7 a side football. They did not concede a goal the whole tournament winning every game in their group and drawing 0-0 in the final to Kings Oak. It then went straight to penalties which we won!!

District Futsal Success!!

Congratulations to the Year 8B, Year 9B and Year 10B boys Futsal teams who all managed to win the Annual District Futsal tournament held at Tewkesbury School this term. This is a fantastic achievement with over ten district teams in each event. The boys have certainly put a target on their backs for next year when we hope we can defend all three titles!!

Year 10 Boys Futsal Team

Year 9 Boys Futsal Team



Year 8 Boys Futsal Team





Congratulations to the Key Stage 3 Girls, Key Stage 4 Girls and the Key Stage 4 Boys Badminton Teams who recently competed in the County Badminton Finals. All three squads finished second just missing out on a place in the South West Finals. Well done to all who competed.

Key Stage 4 Boys playing Pates for 1st place in the County Finals

South West Schools Cross Country News

Congratulations to all students who were selected to run for Gloucestershire Team at the recent South West Regional heats. The best athletes from Dorset, Somerset, Avon, Devon, Wiltshire and Cornwall also competed in the event which was held down in Newquay this year, a long trip!! Our Balcarras students did amazingly to get into the County Squad but a special mention must go to Patrick Paul who finished 3rd in the Inter Boys race, Olivia Avery who finished 7th in the Inter Girls race and Evie Avery, Ben Yates and Monty Wilkins who all finished well in their individual races. Many congratulations to those of you selected to represent the South West in the National Cross County finals!!

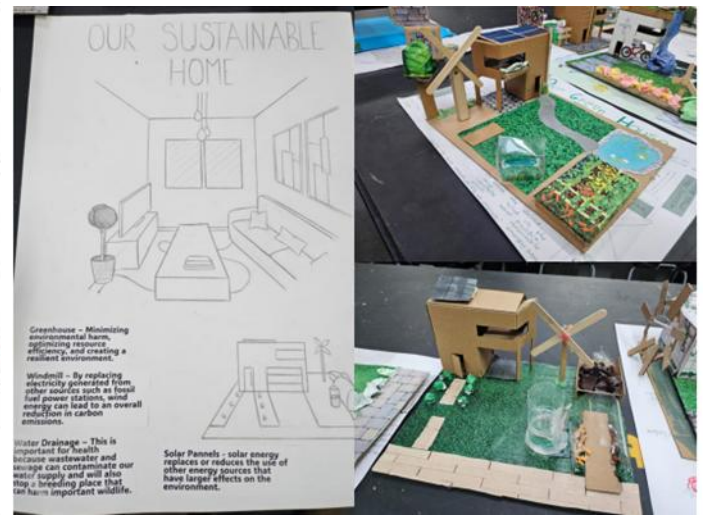
DT + ART YEAR 8 CURRICULUM DAY

JEN SWANEPOEL, HEAD OF DT

Y8 students took part in a 'Grand Designs' themed curriculum day on Wednesday the 13th of Feb. In D&T they were challenged to design and model a sustainable house with a range of renewable energy sources. In Art students learnt how to draw in two-point perspective – an essential skill for any budding Architect.

The prize for best house and poster went to Belle Maloney, Issy Shaw, Lyra Cole and Safron Cook from 8G2. They each win a £10 Amazon voucher.

Congratulations!!



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

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



COMMUNITY NOTICES



kariepilates@gmail.com

🏠 Local & Reliable Furniture Removals in Cheltenham 🏠

Hi everyone!

We're Felipe and Albie, two 19-year-olds who grew up in Cheltenham. Together, we proudly run Gentleman's Move where we provide top-quality removal services with care and professionalism.

Our Services Include:

- 🏠 Man & A Van Services
- 🏠 Furniture Pick-up & Delivery
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- 🏠 Small Removals
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Supporting local businesses keeps our community thriving, so if you need reliable help with your move, we would love to hear from you!

Thanks for your support!

<https://www.gentlemansmove.com>