

Update from the Head

Dear Parents

We have reached the end of week three. The school year has a pattern of events which are similar from year to year so that a kind of rhythm is established. If we have reached the end of week three then we must have completed Open Week and the Sponsored Walk and we have!

Open Week

It has been a real pleasure to show people around the school this week. I am ever so grateful to our pupils who have done most of the work—they really are the school's best salespeople! Here is a photo of Miss Jowett introducing Freddie and Florence from 7O2 who gave a wonderful talk to prospective pupils and parents.



The Sponsored Walk



What a lovely way to spend an afternoon. We are so fortunate that the school nestles alongside the Cotswold Escarpment and taking the chance to spend some time walking up and down it is well worth the effort. I walked alongside the Chair of Governors, Peter Mitchener and the School Dog Buddy. As I was walking up I paused briefly to look back at Cheltenham. It really is a lovely sight...from above Cheltenham looks like a town in a wood—there are so many trees. And of course, it was all done in a good cause—all of the proceeds from the walk will go to Sue Ryder. The pupils were super and there were only two bits of litter that I spotted along the course although Buddy did create some items that needed picking up also.

Full Governors Meeting

On Tuesday evening we had the first full governing board meeting of the year. There are 16 governors and they are joined at their meetings by the school's senior staff. We are ever so fortunate to have such a committed and skilled group of governors. The meeting went very well. Here is a nice photo of us at the end.



Year 10 GCSE Info Evening

Hot on the heels of the Governing Board Mr Towers and I met with parents of Year 10 pupils to discuss how we plan to support them through their GCSEs. If you missed the evening please find information here:

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/page/?title=Year+10+GCSE+Information+Evening&pid=105>

Year 12 Icebreaker

On Wednesday afternoon all 255 Year 12 pupils gathered in the Sports Hall for our traditional Year 12 Icebreaker event. There were all sorts of crazy tasks and challenges and it was all led brilliantly by Mr Leatherbarrow and the Year sixth form tutor team. I have got to say that Year 12 have made a brilliant start.

Sixth Form Bonding BBQ

Whilst the lower school were busy on the walk the sixth form gathered for the annual Bonding BBQ. One of the pupils acted as DJ and there was a lovely atmosphere. Organising a BBQ for 450 is quite something—my thanks to the sixth form team.

A Little Bit More on Funding

Last week in my update I referenced the SchoolCuts report which identified that school funding has reduced by billions in real terms since 2010. Taking the data produced by SchoolCuts we have worked out that in real terms we are receiving £1.4 million less than we were in 2010. £1.4 million would fund 8 teachers, 10 support staff and still leave £400,000 left over to invest in the infrastructure of the school. That is about what we have had to cut over the last ten years. I wonder how many people realise the scale of the cuts to education funding in this country.

The government tried to create some positive press this week by claiming that the pay rise for teachers would now be fully funded. They said that the pension contribution rate for support staff is reducing and that they would not claw this money back. The reality is that we had already budgeted for this and had never imagined that the government would 'claw this money back'. So for us nothing changes. We are still left with a big shortfall in our funding because the pay rise is partially unfunded.

PTFA AGM

On Thursday 23rd September at 7pm the PTFA AGM will be taking place on TEAMS. If you would like to attend please email ptfa@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk for the link before 4pm.

Invigilators required

We are looking for people to join our bank of Exams Invigilators to assist in ensuring the integrity of the Examination process. These positions are on a casual basis and are paid at the minimum wage + holiday pay. Working hours can vary as exam rooms need to be set up before the school day begins and can occasionally run beyond the end of the school day. Exams are predominately during normal school hours, Invigilators are asked to commit to our exam windows, which total 12-14 weeks across the academic year and include mock exams across all year groups together with the public exams in the summer.

Are you, able to follow processes and procedures accurately, able to remain calm when under pressure and respond effectively to unexpected situations, can you demonstrate patience and understanding?

If you are interested and/or would like more information, please email your details to exams@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk.

Careers Fair 2026

Not long to go until the Balcarras Careers Fair. It will take place at the school on Thursday 1st October from 5pm. See news article here:



CAREERS FAIR 2026

Connect with experts from over 60 universities, colleges, employers and apprenticeship providers to get answers to your questions and explore your future study and career options.



Thursday 1 October



5pm-7.30pm



Balcarras School – Main Hall, Gym and Common Room

Presentations will take place in the library throughout the evening

PLEASE NOTE:

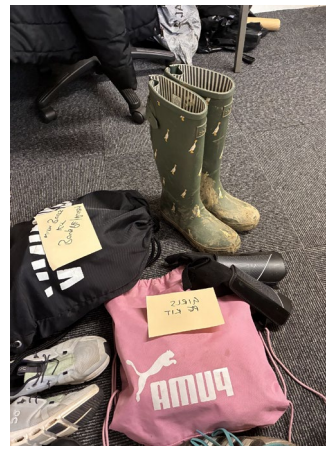
Quiet time from 4.30pm-5pm

Year 11, 12 and 13 from 5pm. Year 9 and 10 and HSL from 6pm.



Lost Property in School

We have shared the following items on the school facebook page already. This is just a small selection of the items in lost property – none of which are named. If you can identify any of these items, please collect them promptly.



Please can parents make sure all items coming into school have names on. Items that are named are returned to pupils straight away. There are plenty of other items in lost property from last term that are not in these photographs!

Safeguarding Information

Everyone who works at Balcarras is trained in safeguarding. I stressed to your children that they can always approach any adult in the school if they are worried about anything. Of course, we are required to have a designated safeguarding team in place. This is the team for 2026-27:

Need someone to talk to? Need support? Feeling anxious?

You can talk to the Balcarras **SAFEGUARDING** team...

Miss McCarthy
Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Mrs Phelpshead
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

Mrs Winterbottom
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

Mrs Noble
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

Mr Foakes
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

Mr Rothwell
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL)

If you are in a friendship that is upsetting you, or encouraging you to do the wrong thing.

If you feel unsafe at school, at home, or online.

If you are worried, or feel you need some support.

If you are concerned about a friend, or someone in your family.

CONTACT US:
safeguarding@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk or visit us in our offices along the main corridor, or in the sixth form area.

Please trust that we will deal with your concerns discreetly.

Right almost time for the weekend. Before I sign off let's all just take a moment to enjoy looking at the top of the Premier League table:

	Team	Played	Won	Drawn	Lost	For	Against	GD	Points	Form
1	Arsenal	4	4	0	0	8	1	7	12	— W W W W
2	Manchester City	4	4	0	0	8	2	6	12	— W W W W
→ 3	Leeds United	4	2	2	0	7	3	4	8	— W D D W
4	Hull City	4	2	2	0	5	2	3	8	— W W D D
5	Brighton & Hove Albion	4	2	1	1	13	5	8	7	— W L D W
6	Chelsea	4	2	1	1	10	9	1	7	— W W L D
7	Brentford	4	1	3	0	7	4	3	6	— W D D D
8	Liverpool	4	1	3	0	6	4	2	6	— D D W D

If Leeds keep going like this I might have to dust off my passport! I hope you all have a nice weekend.

Dominic Burke