

11<sup>th</sup> September 2015

Dear Parents,

Balcarras is, without doubt, the most successful and popular comprehensive in Gloucestershire. We achieve more progress from Y7 to Y11 than any other school (including all the grammars) and have amongst the very highest GCSE and A-level results. Ofsted said last year that our school was a very happy place for both students and teachers and that, while everything was rated as outstanding, the quality of teaching was praised above all else. They also sang the praises of our special needs team and were very complimentary about the incredible range of extra-curricular opportunities at all levels. We've also recently started a new programme to support sixth form students who hope to go to one of the top universities.

None of these achievements come easily: they require a great deal of time, effort and money. Fortunately we are blessed with a very strong leadership team and a talented and dedicated teaching staff.

The odd thing about all this is that despite our very, very many successes and superb provision, we are one of the least well-funded schools in the country. We do receive some extra cash to fund the support we offer other schools via our Teaching School and Maths Hub work, but the way central funding works means that we receive less than other schools within the county, which is itself poorly funded. We are making cuts to our spending in order to balance the books: there will be less for IT resources, building maintenance and so on.

Last year we held two meetings for parents to discuss the school's very difficult financial situation over the next 3 to 5 years. At both meetings, parents asked if there is a way that they can contribute more to the school.



We have been running a gift aid scheme for 12 years now, and we are hugely grateful to all of our parents who have contributed to the scheme. Money raised from gift aid has meant that we have two modern, safe minibuses which are used almost every day and allow pupils to enjoy numerous trips and sporting fixtures. Gift aid also meets all costs of the school magazine.

We appreciate that not all of our parents can afford to donate to gift aid and we do not want parents to feel any pressure to contribute. However, the next few years are going to be extremely tight and we are determined to maintain the outstanding standards that our parents have come to expect from us as a school, if we can.

The form attached gives parents the chance to join the scheme or increase your contribution. There will be a link available on the website to download the form. All the funds raised will go directly to the education of children at Balcarras and we will be very grateful if you decide to contribute in this way.

Yours sincerely,

Phil Collie  
Chair of Governors

Rebecca Roberts  
Chair of the PTFA