



September 18th 2017

Dear Parents,

Welcome back to another school year. I hope that you and your family had a pleasant summer holiday. Mine was great—we spent a week in Wales, where it rained a lot, and a week in Guernsey, where the sun shone every day. The new term has started well and there is a purposeful and busy atmosphere around the school.

Exam Results

The results our students achieved in the summer were quite simply the best in the school's history. 92% of students achieved 5A*/C including English and maths, which is a new school record. The results in English and maths, which were both reformed GCSEs, were amazing. 19 students achieved a grade 9 in maths and 19 students achieved a grade 9 in either English Language or English literature. 83% of students achieved a grade 5-9 in maths and 85% of students did so in English. When the national results are published I believe that these results will place the school amongst the highest achieving nationally.

At A level the picture was similarly pleasing. 67% of grades at A level were awarded at grade A* to B which is a new record for the school. Our AS results were also the highest we've ever achieved with 52% of grades being awarded at A to B. The vast majority of our students were able to access their first choice university and the current Year 13 have a wonderful platform upon which to build.

I'd like to congratulate all of our students and pay tribute to the hard work of their teachers.

Value Added

Later this term the government will publish the value added figures for both GCSE and A level. I believe that our figures will be very positive. We subscribe to a results service called ALPS which is a way of comparing your results instantly to the national data set.

GCSE	ALPS GRADE 2
AS	ALPS GRADE 2
A Level	ALPS GRADE 2

An ALPS grade 2 means that the school is operating in the top 10% of schools nationally. To be doing so at each examination point is exceptional. It's a difficult job to get outstanding value added at A level when you've already done it at GCSE. The fact that our students are able to do so is a great testament to their hard work and dedication, the wonderful support of you, their parents, and the skill and drive of the teachers.

Building work

It's been a busy summer of works here at Balcarras. We have a brand new science lab, the pavilion has been converted into the Year 11 Common Room, the fire alarm system has been completely

overhauled and there has been a full programme of re-decoration around the school. Despite the difficult funding situation we find ourselves in, we are determined to invest in the school as much as we can.

You will have noticed that the new music block is not yet ready. We are hoping that it will be completed shortly after half term. There are also two new covered areas being built in the school which will be ready at about the same time.

New Staff

We have a number of new staff joining the school:

Sally Beeson – *Mathematics (Part-time)*
Louise Bowstead – *MFL*
Katie Brennan – *D&T Product Design*
Helen Chong – *Director of Music*
Jasmin Ferguson – *Textiles*
Samantha Flavell – *Science (Physics)*
Andrew Harding – *History*
Sarah Huntley – *Geography (Temp)*
Holly James – *PE (Temp – Maternity cover)*
Teresa Loader – *Computer Science*
Danielle Marshall – *Mathematics*
Amelia Noble – *English*
Abi Richardson – *Mathematics (Part-time)*
Helen Sweeney – *Mathematics*
Jenny Swanepoel – *Head of D&T*
Kate Waterman – *English (Temp – Maternity cover)*

Elizabeth Dovey – Teaching Assistant
Anna Sim – Teaching Assistant

Alison Shaw - Receptionist
Tom Darby - Site Assistant

We wish them all well for the year ahead.

Gift Aid - The Big Squeeze

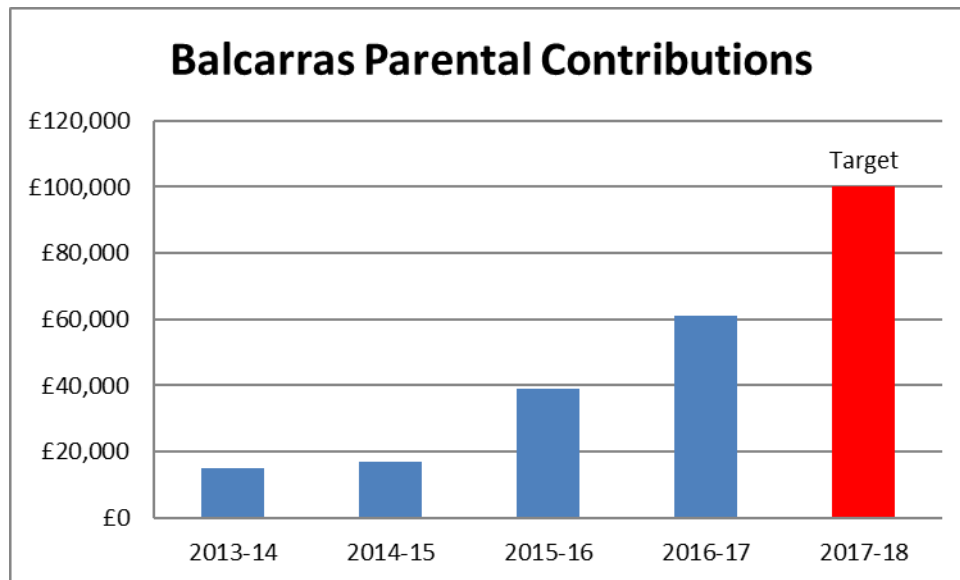
2017-18 will be a difficult year for the school financially. The squeeze on our income becomes acute so that for the first time we have the prospect of operating a deficit budget. I am hopeful that central government is beginning to wake up to the impending crisis and that a long term solution will be put in place. However, for the moment every pound counts.

- Please help the Balcarras School to ride out its most difficult year of funding ever.
- Join parents aiming to raise £100,000 for 2017-18 by completing the Gift Aid form

So far we have managed to get through the funding crisis without fundamentally changing the nature of the school and we want to continue to do this. If you can afford to support the school, then I can promise you that your contribution will be well used.

Please fill in the Gift Aid Mandate Form at the end of this newsletter or review your gift if you already make one. That would help Balcarras to maintain the excellence that it has rightly become

known for. We are very grateful to the more than 200 families who contributed last year, and we do not wish to pressure you into giving money if it would not be affordable.



Sponsored Walk

We're already looking forward to this year's sponsored walk. Please help us to make it a record year of fundraising by sponsoring your children to take part.

#MUSIC4BALCARRAS Funding campaign

Don't forget we're still in the market for donations for the kitting out of the new music block. Please see the website for ways to get involved.

New school for Cheltenham

If you haven't already contributed to our consultation on a new school for Cheltenham, then please do so. It is available on the school website. I'd like to thank those parents who came along to the consultation event at Balcarras last week. There is another one at St James' Primary School on Monday 25th September between 5pm and 7pm.

So far the feedback has been very positive. Some of our parents are understandably concerned about the effect this will have on Balcarras. I would like to reassure you once again that we have no intention of allowing the school to suffer in any way. We have worked hard to develop the school and we are determined to continue to look for ways to make it even better. Far from detracting from Balcarras, I actually believe sponsoring a new school will help to strengthen what we already have.

PTFA Icebreaker Event for Year 7

I'd like to thank the PTFA for organising the icebreaker for Year 7 on Friday evening. The disco was too loud for me but I enjoyed chatting to the parents who were enjoying a drink in the sixth form common room.

Chinese Homestay Visit

Balcarras are excited to welcome 23 students and their teachers from Changshu International School in China next month. The children will be following a Year 8 timetable as well as GCSE Maths and Science lessons. They will have day trips to Oxford and London and by staying with local host families, they will experience the true feel of British family life.

The response to our request for host families has been wonderful but we still have eight children to place. Could you offer a bed (or two) for a fortnight? Payment is made to cover expenses and you will benefit from the opportunity of the mixing and sharing of cultures.

If you are able to host, please contact Mrs Wetherilt on rw@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk or 07961 132904.

Ruth Wetherit, Finance

School Direct Open Day

Our next School Direct Open Day is Wednesday 27th September 2017, 9am – 2pm

For anyone thinking of training to be a teacher and particularly by School Direct – this is an excellent opportunity to find out more about the training year.

The day will comprise of a tour of the school with pupils, a presentation by the school training managers; Alison Bird, Rachael Moore and Rebecca Atkin, Assistant Headteacher, on the training year, funding and have the opportunity to ask any questions. You will observe two lessons, one in your subject and one out of your subject. The final session will be to have lunch with the training managers, current trainees at the school and some members of staff who have been trained via School Direct.

For September 2018 we have placements for teaching; maths, English, modern languages, physics, chemistry, history and geography.

If you wish to come to the open day please download the application form from the school website, complete it and send it to schooldirect@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk by September 22nd.

Becky Atkin, Assistant Headteacher

GCSE Information Evenings

All Year 10 parents are invited to attend the GCSE Information Evening, *Tuesday September 19th* at 7pm in the Hall. During the evening we will share with parents data on your child's potential and information about the structure of the new style of GCSE. This is an important event at the start of their GCSE journey.

All Year 11 parents are invited to attend the GCSE Information Evening, *Wednesday September 20th* at 7pm in the Hall. During the evening we will share with parents data on your child's potential and information about the support that will be available for each pupil. This is an important event and marks the beginning of the build-up towards the GCSE Exams in May and June.

Gary Towers, Assistant Headteacher

Open Week / Open Evening

Our Open Week this year runs from *Monday September 25th to Thursday September 28th*. There will be tours for prospective parents and children at 9.30 each morning and then Open Evening will

run from 6.30pm – 9.00pm on Thursday. Pupils will be released from school at 1.20pm on Thursday 28th so that the necessary preparations can take place. Many pupils, though, will be back to work in departments or to act as tour guides so I would like to express my thanks to their taxi-drivers in advance! Thank you for your help in what is a very important evening for the school.

Balcarras Charity Ball

As you may now be aware Balcarras School is hosting another Black Tie Charity Ball this October at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel in Charlton Kings with the aim of raising funds for our new music block and at the same time allowing us to donate a considerable sum to 'Sue Ryder Care', a local cause close to many of our hearts.

As part of our fundraising we will be holding a "Hamper Raffle" on the night. Each guest will be invited to purchase a raffle ticket with a guaranteed winner from each table. To achieve this, we need your help and are asking parents to donate items for our hampers. We have split the items we need into the different year groups as follows:

Years 7 & 8	bottles of white wine
Years 9 & 10	bottles of red wine
Year 11	bottles of rose wine
Years 12 & 13	bottles of prosecco or any fizz

Please could you deliver items to the school reception by Friday 29th September 2017.

Many thanks for your support.

Beccy Roberts, Balcarras PTFA

Second Hand Uniform



If you have uniform that your child has outgrown, but is still in good condition, we would be grateful if you could send it in to school. We have completely run out of spare skirts, but other uniform items are also useful, to support parents and families who are finding themselves in a financial squeeze.

Neil Baxter, Deputy Head

School Photographs

The school photographer will be in school on Wednesday 20th September. As in previous years there will be the opportunity to purchase an individual photograph for Years 7-13, plus Year 7, 11 and Sixth Form group photographs. In addition, a family photograph will be available. Please return the attached reply slip to Mrs Massey's office by Tuesday 19th September (end of the day) if you wish a family photograph to be taken.

Paul Greenway, Assistant Headteacher

Advanced Cycling Course for Year 8

There will be an Advanced Cycling Proficiency course for Year 8's later this term. The idea of this is to get pupils confident in cycling on the road. Pupils will be led by trained instructors who work on a 1:2 ratio. It builds upon the Cycling Proficiency program from primary school although you don't need to have done this course to take part. It will take part during the week beginning 16th October 2017. The course is first come first served. There is a minimal cost for the course and participants need to provide their own bike and helmet. Mr Pearce will introduce this idea to pupils during assembly. If you are interested in your child taking part or would like any information then please email Mr Pearce jwp@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Jon Pearce, Geography Teacher

Music – Instrumental Lessons and Extracurricular Groups

Thank you to all those who paid so promptly for their instrumental lessons in school. The majority of lessons will start week beginning 18th September and the rest week beginning 25th September. There is a new noticeboard in the foyer outside the Hall on which timetables are displayed. Students need to check this board on a regular basis to ensure they know when their lesson is. All lessons are in the Practice Rooms that can be accessed through Mu1. Please note, if lessons have not been paid for, students will not be allowed to start lessons, even if they had lessons last term. All Music Extracurricular activities also start week beginning 18th September. Again, the programme is displayed on the noticeboard in the foyer outside the Hall. All students are welcome to attend any group appropriate to them, whether or not they have attended before. It would be fantastic to see lots of new faces.

Helen Chong, Director of Music

Careers Fair

On **Wednesday 4th October between 5.30pm to 7.30pm** you and your child/ren are invited to attend our Annual Careers Fair. Representatives from some of the top universities, local colleges, employers, professions and armed services will be available to give advice on careers and entry routes to anyone from Year 9 upwards.

It's a great opportunity to make useful contacts and gain information about GCSE or A level options, further and higher education, apprenticeships and employment.

The event is designed to encourage exploration of a wider range of career options and courses and the hope is that this will inspire and enable our students to pursue their future goals.

Amongst the many employers and universities attending are: GCHQ, Dyson, Target Group, The NHS, The Forces, Cambridge University, Oxford Brookes University, UCAS, Hartpury College and many more.

This year there will be presentation by a number of Universities:

'Which Course and Why' presentation - Aberystwyth University at 5.45pm

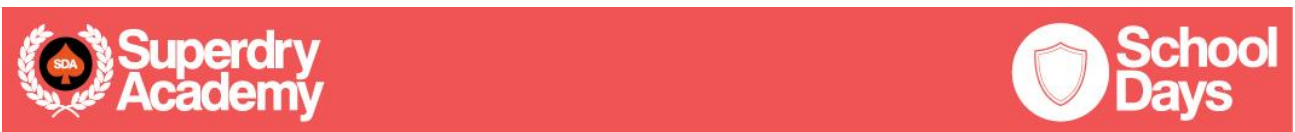
'Writing a Personal Statement' presentation – Aberystwyth University at 6.45pm

'Introduction to Higher Education' – Oxford Brookes at 6.30pm

'The Applicant Journey' – UCAS at 7.00pm

No appointments are necessary but we are expecting it to be busy, so you would be advised to arrive as early as you can. To get the most out of the evening, it's also advisable for students to have some ideas about which delegates they would like to see and to have some appropriate questions prepared.

Jill Lewis, Careers



What to learn about a career at Superdry Head Office?

Superdry School days offers exclusive behind the scenes access to our business, products and people and you could be one of the lucky students to gain a place!

This is for students that are enthusiastic and passionate. For those who are responsible and will represent not only themselves well but also their school.

Superdry don't just want potential Fashion Designers, they want the future Lawyers, IT experts, HR Advisors, Accountants, Graphic Designers, Photographers and Area Managers...and all the jobs in between!

This is a learning day for the students, something that will inspire them in the future.

The departments on site are Design, Human Resources, IT, Logistics, Merchandising, Production, Garment Technology, Retail Support Operations, Marketing, Legal, Finance, Property and Store Development, Ecommerce, Customer Services, Wholesale, Creative Media and Photography.

If you are in Year 10 or above and would like to apply to attend the Superdry School day or to find out more information please visit Mrs Lewis in the Careers office for a form, places are limited to two students per session.



Jill Lewis, Careers

Report on the 2017 Duke of Edinburgh Gold Expeditions

Over the holidays no fewer than 31 of our Year 12 students completed their Duke of Edinburgh Gold Expeditions - the most we have ever had. Following a practice expedition on Dartmoor during the wettest week of the summer, it was a great relief to find the Peak District basking in late summer sun. Each of the five teams performed very well as they completed a self-sufficient 50-mile trek, making memories that they will never forget.

Jack's photo of team-mate Mattie captures the atmosphere perfectly. He is cooking breakfast at a remote campsite near Kinder just before sunrise wearing his trademark hat. Can you make out the coloured birthday balloons on Ella's tent behind him?



Jeremy Niblett, D of E Gold Expeditions

Exam Access Arrangements

Parents should be aware that applications for access arrangements for the summer exams will be submitted by the end of **January 2018**. Only applications for temporary illness or injury can be processed after this time. If you have any queries regarding special arrangements for your child during exams please contact Ms Paris, Exams Officer on 01242 545119 or exams@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Invigilators wanted

We would like to recruit more invigilators to join our existing excellent team. Internal exam periods are between 5 and 10 days in November, January, February and May, and external exams take place throughout May and June. We particularly need people who are available from 8.30am for morning slots and/or able to cover afternoon exams which tend to finish around 3.30pm but could be later. This is a paid role. Training would be provided. To find out more please contact the Exams Office (Ms Christine Paris or Mrs Kate Wilkey) on 01242 545119 or exams@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Christine Paris-Johnstone, Examinations Officer

Lost property

Every week we have HUGE quantities of lost property handed into Reception, usually unnamed. We ask parents to PLEASE label items of clothing, footwear, school bags, PE kits and PE drawstring bags with NAMES (not just initials.) Lost items that are labelled will be returned to their owners, as far as possible.

Once a month lost items that are not labelled will be displayed for the day when pupils and parents are welcome to view and collect any lost property belonging to them or their child. The dates when lost property will be displayed are shown in the school calendar – usually the last Monday of each month.

Unfortunately, any items that are not collected will have to be disposed of. We hope this will reduce our ever increasing mountain of lost property. Thank you for your cooperation.

Pupils with Medical Conditions

Parents/Guardians need to inform the school if their child has a medical condition or an allergy. If necessary, the school will implement a 'Care Plan'.

Please contact Mrs Gemma Towers gt@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk to discuss any medical conditions.

Paracetamol Permission

It is a legal requirement that the school has written parental permission before paracetamol is given for pain relief (i.e. for an occasional headache, toothache, menstrual pain etc.) Once a permission slip has been signed and returned to the school, the permission will be effective until the pupil leaves the school, unless the school is informed of any changes.

The school will **record the date and time in the pupil's planner**, when the paracetamol is given, so that parents are aware. This is an important safety measure. Pupils **without** a planner will **not** be given paracetamol.

If paracetamol permission was given on the data collection sheet last year, this will be effective until the pupil leaves the school, unless the school is informed of any changes. If a data collection sheet has not been signed previously (especially Year 7 parents) and you would like to give permission, please update your data collection sheet that you will be receiving shortly, signed and return to the school.

Gemma Towers, Medical

Newsletter distribution

We are sending this newsletter to all pupils as a hard copy. However, future newsletters will only be available on-line. To make sure we receive your alert and link, please join the VLE at balcarraslearning.com or scan in the QR code opposite where you will find instructions on how to receive log in details. It is incredibly easy and will save the school a lot of paper and the planet a lot of trees! Please do it.



If you would still prefer a hard copy, please contact Karen Adkins ksa@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk 01242 515881.

Online Payment System

Balcarras uses a safe and secure online payment system which we ask parents to use to pay for **ALL** trips, music fees, lockers, book deposits and sponsored walk. The only exception is the canteen which is not available on this system. All new pupils should have now received their unique online link code which is needed to register. Replacement codes for all pupils not yet registered can be obtained from Mrs Davis in the finance office, or by emailing your child's name and tutor group to sed@baccarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Reporting Absence

Parents of pupils in ALL year groups including sixth form should report an absence either by leaving a message on the Attendance Office voicemail (option 1 on the phone menu). Or direct dial on 01242 545114, or by emailing absence@baccarras.gloucs.sch.uk or ljm@baccarras.gloucs.sch.uk. Parents should contact the attendance officer on the first day of absence and on any subsequent days. Any pupils arriving at school after registration must sign in at Reception, indicating the reason why they are signing in late. Thank you.

Lyn Massey, Attendance Officer

Balcarras is on Facebook!

Alongside our @Balcarras Twitter you may also now follow [Facebook.com/BalcarrasSchool](https://www.facebook.com/BalcarrasSchool) for updates and news about school life and events.



Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dominic Burke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath.

Headteacher

I would like my son(s) / daughter(s) to have a family photograph on Wednesday 20th September.

Pupil's Names:

Parent's Signature:

"We think a Balcarras education is invaluable"

The information on this form will be **confidential**. Please return it via a form tutor.

First Name:	Last Name
Full Address:	
Name(s) of son(s)/daughter(s) at Balcarras	

Please treat all qualifying gifts of money as Gift Aid donations.

Amount	£5.00 <input type="checkbox"/>	£10.00 <input type="checkbox"/>	£20.00 <input type="checkbox"/>	£50.00 <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Please specify amount) <input type="text"/>
Timing	Monthly <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Starting from ___ / ___ / ___			To last _____ years

I would be interested in helping with a one off capital purchase please contact me

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 28p of tax on every £1 that I gave up to 5 April 2008 and will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give on or after 6 April 2008.

I am / am not a taxpayer (please delete as applicable)	Signed
--	--------

Please notify the School if you want to cancel this declaration, change name and address or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.

If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

Unless you prefer to pay by cheque or cash, could you please complete your bank details in the Standing Order form and return to Balcarras School – we will do all the rest.
MANY THANKS!

N.B. If you already contribute to the scheme, this new commitment will replace your previous one.

STANDING ORDER MANDATE

Please tick:	New Instruction <input type="checkbox"/>	Amend previous Standing Order <input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	--	--

To (name of your bank)

Bank Address

Bank Sort Code:

Account No:

Account Name:

BENEFICIARY DETAILS

YORKSHIRE BANK plc
5 NORTH STREET
GLOUCESTER
GL1 2AH

05-03-64
66313729

BALCARRAS OPPORTUNITIES ACCOUNT

Beneficiary Ref:

.....

PAYMENT DETAILS

Amount of payment £	Date of first payment ___ / ___ / ___
Amount in words	Frequency of payment MONTHLY
Date of last payment ___ / ___ / ___	or continue until further notice (please tick) <input type="checkbox"/>

Payer signature	Date
-----------------	------

Payer contact telephone number (only in case of a query about this form)
--