

Balcarras School Curriculum Content – Year 7

2026-2027

Dear Parents

I hope that your child is beginning to settle into life at Balcarras and has enjoyed the start to the year.

This letter has been written to give you some introduction information about the courses that your child is following and answer some common questions that parents have at the start of the year. All curriculum content is linked to the Curriculum Maps on the school website. For further detail on the curriculum please contact the head of department for that curriculum area and take a look on the school website:

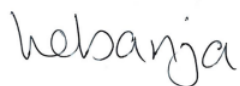
www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk > Learning at Balcarras > Subject Areas.

Your child is being taught in their tutor group, which is made up of a cross-section of all the pupils in the year. The one exception is mathematics, where the pupils have been grouped into sets of similar ability.

I hope that Year 7 will prove to be the start of a bright career for your child here at Balcarras.

Yours sincerely

Harriet Ebanja

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads 'hebanja'.

Associate Assistant Headteacher

September 2026

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Subject	Curriculum content	Graded Assessment
Art	- Baseline - Colour - Mark making - Litter bugs	Pupils are assessed during and at the conclusion of each topic. A marksheet for each can be viewed in their sketchbook and clearly outlines the knowledge and skills that are being developed and assessed and how your child is progressing in line with their target.
Computing	Inside the Black Box Picture Perfect Postcards Bebras Challenge Introducing Programming with Micro:bits	Pupils will receive a grade for each unit they complete, along with comments on how they can improve where appropriate. Grades will use a 9–1 scale, except for the Bebras Challenge, which uses its own external grading system.
Design and Technology	- Trick deck project - Block bot project - Zip tag project - Introduction to nutrition - Introduction to food - Day of the dead project	Pupils are assessed at the end of each rotation, with feedback recorded in their D&T passport. Your child will receive an effort grade, progress information (for example, working towards target, meeting target, or above target), and written feedback explaining how they can improve.
Drama	- Introduction to drama - Storytelling and fairy tales - Mime - Shakespeare - Introduction to script	Pupils will be formally assessed twice in Year 7. The first assessment is after the 'Storytelling and Fairy Tales' unit. Students will create a devised piece of work and perform in front of their peers. They will receive two grades, one for 'creating' and the other for 'performing'. The second assessment is at the end of Year 7 after the Introduction to Script unit. Students will perform a piece of script

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		from a Roald Dahl play in front of their peers. They will receive two grades, one for 'creating' and the other for 'performing'.
English	- Ghost stories (Creative Writing) - Treasure Island (Novel/Reading) - The Tempest (Reading) - The World Today (Speaking and listening)	Pupils will complete 3 graded assessments (Writing, Reading and Speaking & Listening). In year 7 the assessments are writing a ghost story, an analytical essay on 'Treasure Island' and a persuasive speech. Students will also complete knowledge tests within the year.
Geography	- What is geography? - How sustainable is Balcarras and Charlton Kings? - How are countries different from pole to pole? - Map skills - Why do rivers flood? - How do humans impact the physical landscape? - Why do oceans need protecting? - Do the opportunities of urban growth outweigh the challenges?	Pupils will sit 3 graded assessments which assess geographical knowledge, skills and application. In Year 7, the assessments are in the Pole to Pole, flooding and physical landscapes topics.
History	- Anglo Saxons and Vikings - Medieval Realms - Song & Yuan Dynasties	Students will have 3 skill based assessments. 3 frequent, formative low stakes knowledge tests. 1 of which will be written test 1 Evaluative PEEL on Anglo Saxons & Vikings, 1 source analysis and 1 historian analysis throughout the year.
Mathematics	- Numeracy toolbox - Factors and multiples - Ordering integers, decimals and fractions - Multiplying and dividing decimals - Constructing and labelling - Introduction to algebra - Angle rules and 2D shapes - 3D shapes - Units of time and money - Calculating with fractions - Units of length, mass, volume - Ratios - Solving equations - Area and volume	In maths students will sit 3 assessments. One in October on numeracy skills. Then 2 graded assessments in February and June. Students will receive a progress grade for each of these together with areas to work on to improve.

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	- Percentages - Coordinates and transformations - Measuring and presenting data	
Modern Foreign Languages - French	- Me, my family and friends - Personality and descriptions - School	In French, pupils are assessed at the end of each topic to measure their progress. Throughout the year, they are assessed across all four language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and their assessment grades are recorded in their Learning Journey at the front of their exercise book.
Music	- Musical Elements and Notation - Vocal Skills - Keyboard Skills Vol. 1 - Film Music Motifs - Jazz and Improvisation - Composition Skills Vol. 1	
Personal, Social, Health, Economic education	- Relationships Education - Health Education - Living in the Wider World	
Physical Education	- Baseline assessment - Introduction to core skills through invasion games, gymnastics and HRF - Develop core skills through invasion games and dance - Develop core skills through striking/field games, net games and athletics	
Religious Education	- Christianity - Philosophy and Ethics - Belief in Action	In RE we assess pupils on five key skills, in year 7 this will be done through an extended writing task – ‘who or what is important to Christians?’, an art piece for the national Spirited Arts Competition and a key term test at the end of the year.
Science	- The Basics of Life - Ecosystems & Life Processes - Physical Changes & the Particle Model - Atoms, Elements & Mixtures - Waves & Space - Forces	Pupils have two standard homework's for each topic which are marked and give improvement tasks. At the end of each topic there is a graded test for which verbal feedback will be

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		provided. Finally, there is a terminal exam testing on content learnt throughout the Year.
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VLE: Virtual Learning Environment

The VLE is an online extension of the classroom, which can be accessed by pupils, parents and staff, and aims to share information and resources in a simple, clear and intuitive way. Any device which has internet access can view the site at the following address: balcarras.fireflycloud.net

The system, called Firefly, allows the opportunity for personalised learning for pupils and the ability for them to become increasingly independent and responsible for their learning and self-organisation. It also enables parents and guardians to support them at home, by viewing their homework, resources and potentially see their progression through the school.

To log on, new parents should visit the site address, and activate their account, using the email address the school holds on record as part of your contact information. Current parents should have their children added to their account already.

In September, every new student will be allocated a username and password to access not only the VLE, but the school network as well. When logging into Firefly, pupils must pick the log in with Office 365 option on the right-hand side of the login page. They will then be prompted to enter their school email address, e.g. #####@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk, where the ##### are the pupils 4-digit username.

The password they then use to login is the same one they will have chosen when first logging onto the computers at school.

There are also mobile apps available for both parents and pupils, which can be downloaded from the appropriate app store. These are called Firefly for Parents and Firefly for Students, and are free. When logging in for the first time, the same username and password must be used along with the school code: balcarras, to link successfully with our system.

School Network

Pupils can access their school files from home, including both their personal Home Drive and the shared Pupil Resources folder, through OneDrive.

To access these files:

- Use the OneDrive link at the top of the school website, or
- Go to the school's Virtual Learning Environment (Firefly) and follow the links provided.

Because these files are stored in the cloud, any changes made at home will automatically update - there's no need to email files back and forth or worry about different versions.

If your child needs help logging in, they should use their school email address (e.g. 1234@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk) and the password they use to login the school computers.

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Online Safety

The school has a well-established ICT Code of Conduct. All pupils will be allowed access to the internet for school related activity. Anything not directly linked to schoolwork, such as playing or downloading games and accessing social media services is prohibited. Pupils who break the code of conduct, which is monitored by our network manager, will be sanctioned. This often includes having their network access revoked.

When outside of school, pupils should continue to use technology in a responsible manner. In particular, pupils should be mindful of how you use social media services, such as Instagram and TikTok. It is strongly recommended that pupils make their profiles private. Pupils should also carefully consider how they communicate with each other on these platforms as this is often the cause of friendship issues within groups.

We recommend that parents monitor computer, smart phone and tablet use at home. Support in this can often help prevent or mitigate problems caused by the use of social media. Parents of younger pupils should also be aware of the age restrictions many social media services have, the majority requiring users to be at least 13 years old. Many governments and children's specialists believe that access to social media for under 15s is unhealthy and bad for a child's mental health and wellbeing. Balcarras would fully support any parent who decides that they do not wish for their child to have any access to any social media before they are 15 years old.

We recommend all parents read the school's advice on social media safeguarding which can be found on the school website: [www.balcarras.co.uk/Our school/Safeguarding and Wellbeing/Social Media](http://www.balcarras.co.uk/Our%20school/Safeguarding%20and%20Wellbeing/Social%20Media).

How will your child be assessed at KS3?

- All students will be given a target grade of 1-9 (1 being the lowest, 9 the highest) for all students. We will use the pupil's KS2 entry 'score'. We will also consider any department 'baseline tests' and set them a target by Christmas of Year 7.
- The target grade (e.g. grade 6) will remain the same grade for all three years (7, 8 and 9) but the work and assessment criteria to meet that grade gets progressively tougher year on year.
- We will report progress on whether the pupil is successfully below/working towards/on/above that target using 'interim' and enhanced reports throughout the three years. An end of key stage 3 grade will be given in the last term of year 9.
- Targets may be raised over the years if pupils achieve them too easily. But they will rarely be lowered as we think every pupil should strive to reach their potential with our help.
- Many styles of work – not just official assessments will be marked using the numbers 1-9. All class and homework will be continually assessed through a variety of feedback mechanisms to ensure that pupils know how to make progress.
- There will be no assumption that a Grade 7 at KS3 should mean a grade 7 at GCSE (however, it will give us an indication of their ability). Heads of Department have all designed their own sets of assessment criteria for the grades which have been passed through the Senior Management Team to ensure consistency, fairness and rigour.