



Balcarras

From strength to strength

YEAR 9

SUBJECT INFORMATION
FOR PARENTS

2025 - 2026



Dear Parents

This booklet is a guide to the courses your child is following in Year 9. I hope you will find it useful. If it does not answer all of your questions, please contact the head of department concerned and they will be happy to provide any further information you need or, take a look on the school website for more details via the Curriculum Maps.

<https://www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk/page/?title=Subject+Areas&pid=119>

In Year 9 some groups are sorted by prior attainment, others are not. Any setting took place before the summer break. It will be reviewed later in the year once some assessments have taken place.

Later this year we will involve you in the process that leads to the choice of optional courses in Years 10 and 11. Please take note of this important date:

Thursday 29th January 2026- 4-7pm
Year 9 Parents' and Options Evening

Yours sincerely

Mrs Elizabeth Cullis
Assistant Headteacher
October 2025

Art

Work in the studio

Year 9 marks the completion of the Key Stage 3 course. Pupils will have gained a broad knowledge and understanding of different art styles, movements and cultures. Although work will continue to be teacher led, pupils will be increasingly encouraged to develop more individual approaches to their assignments. Pupils will be asked to draw on previous skills acquired throughout this valuable key stage. A typical project would be one where pupils research into how different artists and cultures have used the portrait in their differing art works. From this research pupils will be encouraged to discuss their findings, and produce their own re-interpretation of their discoveries.

Resources used

These are wide-ranging and can include drawing, painting, collage, print-making and clay work. Stimuli for lessons include objects, books, reproductions and demonstrations. ICT and internet research will also be widely used.

How parents are able to help

It is important that pupils choosing art as a GCSE option have developed effective habits of homework. Parents can play a valuable part by encouraging observational studies based on objects inside and outside the home. Any stimuli that enhances an awareness of art history is to be encouraged, such as books, visits to museums, galleries and ICT research.

Head of Department: Mr D Hazael

Computing

Work in the classroom

In Year 9, pupils continue to build on the skills developed in previous years, with a focus on applying their knowledge in a range of career driven projects. The curriculum offers opportunities to explore both **Computer Science** and **Creative Media** in greater depth, helping pupils to develop a clearer understanding of each strand before making choices about their GCSE options.

Pupils complete a programming project that develops their problem-solving, logic, and coding skills in greater depth. They also explore branding and digital design as part of a Creative Media project, focusing on how digital products are created to meet client needs. Finally, they consider the ethical, legal, and environmental impact of computing—an important part of understanding the real-world responsibilities of working in technology.

Curriculum

- Programming project
- Branding
- Ethics in computing

Assessment

Each unit is assessed using a 9–1 grading system, with feedback provided to help pupils reflect on their progress and next steps. Assessment focuses on both technical proficiency and the ability to think creatively and critically—skills that are essential in both strands of the subject at GCSE level.

Access to resources

Pupils have access to a range of hardware and software across the school, as well as the school's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), which is accessible from home. A dedicated Computing homework room is also available to support independent study and project work.

How parents can help

This is a great time to start talking to your child about future options in Computing. Whether they are more drawn to programming, problem-solving, and system design, or to digital creativity, branding, and media production, both strands offer exciting opportunities and lead to a wide variety of careers. The **Next Steps** section on the Computing department page of the VLE includes resources on career pathways, industry examples, and guidance to help pupils make confident and informed choices ahead of GCSE.

Head of Department: Mr S Cooper

Design and Technology

Work in the classroom

In Year 9, pupils are expected to become increasingly autonomous in their work as they progress through the key stage. Pupils will continue to develop the skills, knowledge and techniques explored in Years 7 and 8.

Resources used

Pupils will be required to wear a protective apron during practical lessons to comply with health and safety regulations. These will be provided by the department.

Pupils will be expected to undertake written work using a variety of media, including A4 and A3 paper and project booklets. There is a growing emphasis on the use of ICT for design and manufacture (CAD/CAM). The department uses a wide range of text books and online resources to support learning, both in and out of the classroom.

How parents are able to help

Parents can support learning by showing an interest in the work their children undertake in the classroom, and by discussing homework tasks which are used to reinforce and develop this learning. It is recommended that the VLE is monitored on a regular basis.

In food and nutrition, it would be helpful for parents to carefully check ingredient lists, recipe sheets and keep up to date with the VLE to ensure the correct resources are available for practical activities. Parents are expected to provide ingredients for practical work. If there is a financial problem with this, then please contact us to see if we can help. In food lessons, pupils will continue to learn and develop food preparations skills. They will do this by completing practical work through lessons on multi-cultural and protein foods, as well as completing a design based task.

In product design and textiles, pupils should be encouraged to consider the familiar products we use every day in a more critical way. Pupils could start to develop design skills by using ICT programs such as Sketch Up or Tinkercad. These are both free computer aided design programs that pupils can use at home to develop their design skills.

There is some technical vocabulary in this subject, and pupils need to practise so that they can use it correctly and with confidence.

Head of Department: Mrs J C Swanepoel

Drama

Year 9 develops earlier work in Years 7 and 8 continuing to build confidence, teamwork and presentational skills for life. We also explore wider contexts building a basic understanding of more technical dimensions of theatre, film and television- how drama effects can influence how we represent and perceive life on stage and through the media.

The students begin by exploring comedy as a genre whilst developing the improvisation skills taught in Year 8. This unit encourages students to think creatively, challenge themselves and step outside of their comfort zone. Students will explore different types of comedy including farce, slapstick and stand up.

he Year 9 course also serves as an introduction and bridge to our Key Stage 4 course. In the Spring term, students will complete a unit of work focused on the design aspects of theatre, including costume, lighting, set and sound. They will complete written work tasks in a booklet using recordings of National Theatre productions as professional examples of design elements in action.

In the summer term students will return to practical work and become familiar with the style of key practitioners from the world of theatre. These will include Brecht, Stanislavski, Artaud and Hagen. This experience prepares the students for the demands of drama at a higher level should they decide to opt for this subject.

(Please note that some work may involve video recording – as do the GCSE and A level courses in this subject. If this is not acceptable, then parents should contact the Drama Department to ‘opt out’ of this element.)

How parents are able to help

The Year 9 drama course does not normally involve homework, however, there can be great benefit if parents show an interest in activities and encourage discussion at home. Indeed, students may decide to do some extra work beyond school- learning lines, rehearsing or researching topics. This will be voluntary but should be encouraged.

Head of Department: Mrs H Wranosky

English

Work in the classroom

Pupils in Year 9 continue to develop the skills inherent in reading, writing, speaking and listening. They will work individually, in pairs or as part of a group, with work taking place in the library and the computer room, where possible, as well as in the classroom. Students will notice that the texts chosen are increasingly demanding and are now preparing them for GCSE.

Resources

Pupils' work is based on novels, poems, plays and non-fiction texts with the assignments and activities being developed within the department. As in Years 7 & 8, every pupil has an English book in which they will complete work in lessons, homework and end of unit assessments. Students are expected to maintain this to a high standard.

Curriculum

Students in Y9 will study the following units of work:

- Blood Brothers (play)
- Dystopian Fiction (Reading & Writing)
- Romeo & Juliet (Shakespeare)
- Writing Reality
- Power & Conflict Poetry (GCSE)

Assessment

English teachers will assess students in a variety of ways including the highlighting of achievements and also areas to develop, focused and summative written comments, specific targets, verbal feedback and progress set against assessment criteria. Students will be guided and encouraged to review their own work so that they have a clear idea of how to improve.

How parents are able to help

Parents are asked to continue to show an interest in their child's homework and to discuss the work while it is in progress. This extends the audience beyond the teacher and fellow pupils and helps to give the work a genuine sense of value. Parents can help their children to learn corrected spellings and punctuation and to review any individual targets that have been set.

Head of Department: Mr D Sharkey

Geography

Learning in and outside the classroom

During Year 9 pupils will be taught a range of physical and human geography topics including ecosystems, water resources, tourism, coasts and global trade and conflict. These have been designed to meet and exceed the demands of the new National Curriculum programme of study for KS3. Through these topics pupils will also improve their knowledge of places as well as map skills, graphical skills and independent learning skills.

In addition to in-class learning, there will also be an optional fieldtrip to a wildlife park which will complement the Ecosystems topic. Pupils will be taught how to identify their successes and next steps through the use self-reflection, peer assessment, group analysis, and target setting to support assessment in geography, in addition to teacher assessment.

Resources used

A combination of text and ICT resources are integrated into each scheme of work to ensure pupils are exposed to a wide range of academic materials. Pupils will learn through independent work, pair and group work, role play, internet research and interactive games/activities.

How parents can help

Homework is set regularly to consolidate learning compliment and extend work completed in the classroom. Students should be encouraged to use reference materials such as an atlas, the internet, textbooks, magazines and newspapers alongside a dictionary when doing their homework. Parents could encourage students to watch television programmes such as the news, Countryfile and other relevant documentaries to improve their knowledge of current affairs and events. Going for walks using an OS map also consolidates students' map skills. Wider reading of both non-fiction and fiction books that link to relevant topics is also encouraged.

Sharing holiday experiences and asking questions about places parents and friends have visited would broaden horizons and help students to grasp concepts such as levels of development and the implications these have on everyday life in other countries.

For more specific topic support please see our curriculum maps on the school website. These include places to explore, conversation starters and a range of fiction and non-fiction reading linked to each topic.

Head of Department: Miss A Searle

History

Learning in the classroom

Year 9 focuses entirely on 20th-century international history. Pupils explore key global developments including war, empire, revolution, civil rights, and terrorism. These often connect closely to their own lives, family histories and modern-day challenges. Pupils are encouraged to consider both world-changing events and the personal experiences of ordinary people.

This course helps students become well-informed citizens and builds a solid foundation for GCSE History. Pupils engage with key historical questions through class enquiry, debates and independent assignments.

Resources used

Pupils use a wide range of textbooks, library books and digital resources. Primary sources play a significant role, accessed via curated online archives and multimedia platforms. Audio-visual content, historical film clips, and documentaries are used to enhance understanding. Students also participate in enrichment activities, including priority access to our History Week programme and the opportunity to attend educational trips.

How parents are able to help

Encouraging your child to watch high-quality documentaries (such as those on BBC iPlayer, Netflix or YouTube), listen to historical podcasts, or explore museum websites can greatly enrich their understanding. Rather than relying on daily newspapers, students benefit from curated digital articles or child-friendly platforms like BBC Bitesize, Horrible Histories, or The British Library Discovering History site. Conversations with older family members about their experiences can also spark interest and help pupils relate to the past in a meaningful way. Most importantly, encouraging regular reading — fiction or non-fiction — strengthens skills that are vital for GCSE and beyond.

Head of Department: Mr M Stoker

Mathematics

Work in the classroom

Topics covered in Years 7 and 8 are developed further and longer, more complex assignments and investigations are carried out. New topics are also introduced such as error intervals, loci, Congruency, simultaneous equations, etc.

In Year 9, all students from both bands are timetabled for Maths at the same, creating the option of streaming into 8 sets.

End of term assessments are organised in December and February. The whole of Year 9 will sit two exams in May. Each of these testing moments will help students to get 'GCSE ready'. Do they know how to revise, where to find help, how to retain knowledge? Are they ok with time management and solving larger problems independently?

Resources used

Lessons are planned in line with the National Curriculum and the Scheme of Work is based on the Kangaroo Maths Scheme, which is used in many of our feeder schools too.

As in previous years, each student will receive a B.A.M. homework booklet and a MathsWatch login.

For assessments, their own class notes are an essential resource for revision as well as the revision booklets provided by the department.

How parents are able to help

The VLE provides a huge amount of information: The SoW, guidelines on how to revise, assessment dates, homework, feedback, etc. Being aware of what is happening each term, offers a great support for your child. Students will need support and encouragement especially during their examinations in May.

It is also valuable for pupils to be able to talk over their work at home. "What did you see in Maths today?", "How did you get on with the homework?", "What's your revision plan?", ...

If your child needs help with the actual understanding of a topic, the "go to" platform is MathsWatch!

Head of Department: Mr S Critchley

Modern Foreign Languages

In Year 9 the vast majority of pupils continue learning both of their foreign languages.

Work in the classroom

We aim to teach languages in a way which is thoroughly practical. The courses emphasise situations which pupils could meet in their normal lives and set out to equip them with the words and phrases which they need. There is also a focus on grammar in order to prepare pupils for GCSE.

The teacher will often speak to the pupils in French, Russian or Spanish and they are encouraged to use the foreign language as the normal language of the classroom.

Resources used

Each course is based on a textbook which is accompanied by listening resources. These provide an outline of the course which individual teachers will supplement with exercises and activities of their own. You can also find additional activities and useful links on our VLE page.

How parents are able to help

Homework tasks often involve learning new vocabulary and parents can play a valuable part by checking that vocabulary has been learnt to the best of their child's ability. Written homework is also set and it is helpful if parents can check that this has been completed. We expect all pupils to have access to either a bilingual pocket dictionary or a reliable online dictionary such as www.wordreference.com at home.

Finding opportunities to use their languages outside of the classroom can also be highly motivating and we organise trips for Years 8 and 9.

GCSE Italian is also available to this year group. This is a 2-year course and it runs after school every Tuesday from 3.45 until 5pm.

Head of Department: Mr F Seguin

Music

Work in the classroom

In Year 9 students continue to explore music through performing, listening and composing. Frequent links are made to GCSE Music so students can make an informed choice as to whether or not GCSE Music is an option for them. Students develop musical skills through a wide variety of topics, including GCSE Experience, Theme and Variations, Live Lounge, Protest Songs, Dance Music and Film Music. Students are expected to use the skills and knowledge they have acquired throughout Key Stage 3 to complete tasks in a responsible and independent way.

The department's two classrooms, along with practise rooms, allow students to develop individual strengths and interests in preparation for their final Key Stage 3 assessments and equip them with the skills and knowledge to move onto GCSE Music.

Due to the practical nature of the subject, students are constantly receiving verbal feedback. Opportunities are also created for peer, self and teacher evaluation. Work is formally assessed at the end of each topic, often through performing work that has been composed.

Resources used

Students record key words and facts as well as completing written evaluations about their work. Visual and aural stimuli such as videos, posters, recordings and live performances are used to develop appreciation and understanding of the work covered. Specific music software, Mixcraft and Sibelius, are used as composition and performance tools, along with tuned and untuned percussion, electronic keyboards and voices. Students who learn instruments are encouraged to use them in class when this is appropriate.

How parents are able to help

Listening to music and encouraging discussion will help students develop awareness of the basic elements. On occasions, students are directed to extra resources on the school's R:drive or VLE to extend their in-class learning. Students are encouraged to participate in any of the extra-curricular activities.

Please ensure your child has a pair of **headphones** with a mini jack to use in every music lesson.

Head of Department: Mr D Armstrong

Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE)

PSHE education is the school subject through which children and young people acquire the knowledge, understanding and skills they need to manage their lives, now and in the future. PSHE education develops the qualities and attributes pupils need to thrive as individuals, family members and members of society. The Department for Education (DFE) research report states that: *'A high quality PSHE provision has a significant effect on pupils' academic success, makes them more engaged in school and has an overall effect on their well-being'*.

How we deliver PSHE at Balcarras

Pupils in Year 9 are timetabled for 2-hour half termly Personal Development lessons. PSHE is taught within these lessons. Having a 2-hour lesson enables us to bring in visitors and to make Personal Development and PSHE more of an 'event' in school. In addition, tutors deliver PSHE every Monday during a Personal Development lesson.

This year, students will study the following topics during their Monday Personal Development lessons:

Autumn Term – Relationship Education

- Struggling online
- Romantic relationships
- Capacity to consent
- Making disclosures of abuse
- Sexting, peer pressure and consent
- Gender stereotypes
- Managing conflict

Spring Term – Health Education

- Unhelpful thoughts
- Healthy coping strategies
- Dealing with change
- Online stress
- Exploring attitudes
- Drugs, the law and managing risk

Summer Term – Living in the wider world

- Decision making
- Becoming an internet citizen
- Serious and organised crime
- Knife free
- Money (organised by Mrs Lewis)
- Gangs
- Valuing diversity (inclusion, belonging and addressing extremism)

Students will study the following topics during their 2-hour 'event' sessions:

- Equality
- Discrimination
- Self-harm
- Revenge porn
- Body image
- Drugs (including a police speaker session)
- Careers (organised by Mrs Lewis)
- Sex education

Head of PSHE and Citizenship: Miss H Davies

Physical Education

Programme of work

Pupils should become more expert in their skills and techniques and learn how to apply them in different activities. They start to understand what makes an effective performance and how to apply these principles to their own and others' work. They learn to take the initiative and make decisions for themselves about what to do to improve performance. They start to identify the types of activities they prefer and take a variety of roles, such as leader or official.

The timetable consists of:

Girls:	Boys:
Hockey	Football
Netball	Basketball
Basketball	Rugby
Athletics	Athletics
Rounders	Cricket
Tennis	Tennis
Badminton	Badminton
Gymnastics	Gymnastics
Handball	Handball
Football	
Tag Rugby	

Pupils in Years 8 and 9 have an additional lesson which is used to teach elements of health, fitness and communication skills. Each pupil will study health and fitness, outdoor adventurous activities and athletics activities as part of a healthy living programme.

How parents are able to help

Pupils should be encouraged to apply the lessons of this course in their everyday lives throughout the year. They should also be reminded of the importance of the extra-curricular programme and encouraged to attend the activities run by the department and the school sports development officer.

For pupils wishing to play sport at the highest level, the school has excellent links with outside clubs.

Head of Department: Mr M Harvey

Religious Education

The Religious Education Department at Balcarras aims to produce religiously educated and aware pupils who also value truth, seek justice and honour, respect themselves and others and who care about British values and the world they live in. Our aim is to educate pupils so that they are interested in and can understand the religious beliefs, values and traditions of others whilst also being willing to assess their own beliefs against conflicting opinion. As a result of this, religious education helps our pupils build their sense of identity and belonging and allows them to explore world issues in a secure background. Moral and spiritual growth is at the heart of our teaching and pupils are encouraged to show that they are learning from world religions not just learning about world religions.

Although religious education at Balcarras School explores aspects of belief and non belief including Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism and Sikhi, atheism and humanism, we do not presuppose individual commitment. Indeed, we seek to make the content accessible to all pupils whether they belong to a religious tradition or not. In addition, while we are fully conscious of an increasingly diverse and changing society, we are keen to highlight the important role of family and community in religious belief and activity. The work of the department is underpinned by the Gloucestershire agreed syllabus for key stage three and key stage four follow AQA and key stage five follow the EDUQAS religious education examinations.

Parents are able to withdraw their sons and daughters from this personal development if they have strong religious or conscience grounds. These must, however, be discussed in detail with the Headteacher.

Work in the classroom

Pupils in Year 9 start with the world religions of Islam and Judaism and progress onto the 'Applied Religion and Ethics' topic. This allows them to consider the religious beliefs behind these religions and how they compare to their own. This year involves much cross-curricular work with pupils comparing these religions to work they are completing in other subjects, such as History and Science well as media portrayals. Year 9 requires pupils to work in GCSE mode, where they will be asked to consider their opinions on issues and ask fundamental questions. Pupils have found this aspect of the course to be stimulating and throughout the course their confidence at expressing themselves in both discussion and written work is noticeable.

During Year 9 pupils can opt to study GCSE- Religion, Philosophy and Ethics in Year 10 and 11. At GCSE we study the OCR Religious Education examination, which involves pupils learning Christian Theology, Philosophy and Ethics and Buddhist Philosophy. Studying Religion, Philosophy and Ethics GCSE is both challenging and rewarding. Pupils are required to use a range of thinking skills. Pupils are required to have opinions, be able to analyse and critique as well as consider why people hold certain points of view. This course is ideal for pupils who might be thinking of going on to do Religion, Philosophy and Ethics at A-level or want a means of challenging themselves and others about current moral issues.

Head of Department: Mrs H Ebanja

Science

An important difference between science and other subjects is that all students start learning GCSE science content at the beginning of Year 9.

In Years 9, 10 and 11 students complete the AQA Combined science: Trilogy syllabus, worth two GCSE grades. These are examined by six papers in the summer of Year 11. There is no longer any coursework component. It is therefore crucial that work covered in Year 9 is retained for revision.

Over the course of Year 9, students will complete 9 topics: 3 each in biology, chemistry and physics. Each topic will contain 2 graded homeworks and an end of topic test. There will also be a GCSE style mock examination in May. The results of these assessments will be used for the setting process into Year 10.

In Year 9 students work will be graded to reflect the new GCSE: they will be graded from 1-9. Grade 9 is the equivalent of a high A* in the old GCSE structure, grade 7 is the same as an A and grade 5 is comparable to a high C/low B. There are two tiers of entry for the GCSE course. Higher tier (grades 4 to 9) and Foundation tier (grades 1 to 5). A final decision on which tier a student is entered for is made in Year 11.

Resources

The resources used in lessons can be found on the school VLE and R: drive. These include copies of the worksheets, PowerPoints and homeworks used for each topic. Students are also issued with a Year 9 revision guide.

How parents are able to help

We issue front sheets for each topic. These show what a pupil will be learning in each unit and parents can use them to help their children revise for end of unit tests and for the mock examination in May. Science homework is posted on the VLE. Other websites suitable for revision are as follows:

<https://www.bbc.com/education/examspecs/z8r997h>

<http://freesciencelessons.co.uk/>

<https://app.senecalearning.com>

<https://www.physicsandmathstutor.com/>

<https://www.cognitoedu.org>

The GCSE specification we follow can be found at the website below:

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/science/gcse/combined-science-trilogy-8464>

Head of Department: Mr A Spring Wallis

VLE: Virtual Learning Environment

The VLE is an online extension of the classroom, which can be accessed by students, 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 students 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, students 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 students 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 students, 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 son or daughter 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.

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 also 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.

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.

Personal Development

Students in Key Stage 3 and 4 are timetabled for a 30-minute Personal Development lesson every Monday with their tutor. PSHE/RSHE, Careers and Citizenship are all taught within these lessons as well as some extra RE. For more information on PSHE/RSHE see page 14. In addition to the 30-minute lessons, students are timetabled for 2-hour half termly Personal Development lessons, commonly known as 'Extended Personal Development'. Having 2-hour lessons enables us to bring in visitors to speak with groups, and to make Personal Development more of an 'event' in school.

Each Personal Development lesson is planned and tailored to the needs of our children at Balcarras. Lessons are created and delivered by the Head of Personal Development and a committed team of existing teachers. All lessons are sequenced in a scheme of work and underpinned by the British Values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, and for those without faith.

To facilitate children's learning in Personal Development lessons:

- Rules are established at the beginning to create an environment of safety, maturity and security; one in which children are encouraged to talk hypothetically as opposed to each other's personal experiences.
- The purpose of each lesson is made clear.
- Appropriate learning experiences are planned in line with our long-term scheme of work to meet the needs of all the children in the class. Where necessary, the school's SENCO is consulted on best practice for delivery.
- Scenario based learning experiences draw on children's own knowledge and understanding to provide them with a range of opportunities to learn, practise and demonstrate skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding.
- Time is given for children to reflect, consolidate and apply their learning of skills to relevant scenarios.
- Staff training needs are met, to include safeguarding children, handling sensitive and controversial issues and confidentiality to ensure that teachers do not let their personal beliefs and attitudes influence their teaching of Personal Development.

- Staff are encouraged to speak with House Heads and the Head of Personal Development should anyone be concerned about their ability to teach certain areas of the curriculum.
- Balcarras leads the programme, but carefully selected and, where necessary, screened outside visitors may play a role in delivering content.
- All children will be included in these lessons, regardless of ability or special educational needs and/or disability.

How will your child be assessed at KS3?

- We will have TARGET GRADES of 1-9 (1 being the lowest, 9 the highest) instead of levels.
- The target grade (e.g. grade 6) remains 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 full written reports throughout the three years.
- 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.

Tel: 01242 515881

Fax: 01242 250620

Email: admin@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Website: www.balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

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