

GCSE: Preparing for success

Year 10

Name:



Balcarras
From strength to strength

The Virtual Learning Environment - VLE

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. This has been designed to be as simple and easy to navigate as possible. 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 this site and this is their normal student network login. When logging in from outside of school, students must include the last part of their email address that follows their username (**####@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk**).

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 and the school code: **balcarras**, to link successful 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.

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 and that all parents read the schools advice on social media safeguarding which can be found on the school website: **www.balcarras.co.uk** / Our school /Safeguarding and Wellbeing / Social Media.

September 2025

Dear Member of Year 10,

I hope that you have made a good start to your GCSE studies. The next two years will be very important ones for you and will have a large impact on your future options.

We want every student to achieve to the very highest level possible and we want to give you all the support we can. Every year we provide this booklet to students in Year 10 so that you are fully informed about each of your GCSEs and to give you some useful hints on exam preparation.

There will be a full set of mock exams in the summer term and in some subjects there will be controlled assessments during the year.

Much of the hard work needed to achieve good GCSE grades takes place in Year 10, so I would encourage all students to give their absolute best this year.

If you require any additional help or advice please speak to your teachers, who will be only too happy to help you and answer any questions.

The very best of luck.



Mr Gary Towers
Deputy Headteacher

Advice for Parents and Guardians

Making a difference: Helping your child prepare for their GCSEs

These tips will be more relevant when your child is in Year 11 but this is advance warning!

General things you can do to help

- Provide a quiet place for study.
- Encourage the rest of the family to help by not disturbing revision.
- Praise hard work.
- Emphasise the need for plenty of sleep.
- Encourage planned relaxation time (too much study is not helpful).
- Help your child to forget about each exam as it is finished.
- Remind your child that the exam period will soon be over and that there will be a good break from school when they will be able to catch up on what they have been missing!

Useful revision tips

You can help your child by helping them to follow these tips:

- Plan for half-hour sessions or an hour at most.
- In the evenings after school, plan to revise one or two subjects only. Leave some time for relaxation.
- Plan to revise specific topics in each subject, **not** everything at once.
- Ensure that each session starts with tackling the most difficult topics first.
- Encourage that all resources are at hand.

Advice during the spring term

- Get your child to check that they have all notes and books for revision. Get them to talk to their teacher if they are missing any.
- Check that they have a revision timetable which includes the dates and times of the examinations in May and June. Include any important dates (such as birthdays) when you want them to take some time off from revision.
- Include in the timetable a plan for revision.
- Spread revision out evenly so that subject demands match to the exam timetable.

During the exam period

Try to ensure that:

- Your child gets a good night's sleep before exams.
- They have all the equipment for the day.
- They know the start times of each exam for the day and plan to arrive at least 15 minutes before.
- You wish them well and tell them that they have worked hard and that they can only do their best.

School Contacts

Keeping in touch with school can be extremely important when seeking advice in preparation for exams.

Listed are the names of staff who will help should any issues occur during the exam period.

Heads of Houses

Foley:	Mrs Noble
Graveney:	Mr Foakes / Mrs Winterbottom
Ottewell:	Mr Amor
Selvey:	Mrs Whiteland

Examinations Officer

exams@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk

Head of SEND

Miss Niblett

And when it's all over...

Tell your child to relax and forget about study for a while.

Enjoy the summer break!

Art

Exam board: AQA

Assessment Overview: 40% exam / 60% coursework (Coursework runs through Year 10 and Year 11.)

Advice on revision: The art department feel that the best kind of support we can offer the GCSE students is that from September the art department will be running workshops and catch up sessions for those students who would like to take advantage of extra studio time. All art students are welcome. The sessions will run on Tuesday afternoons until 5pm. (Check with your teacher.)

Please feel free to take advantage of this extra tuition.

Business Studies

Exam board: Eduqas

Assessment Overview: 100% exam
62.5% Theory Exam (no tiers) / 37.5% Data Response Exam (no tiers)

Advice on revision: Students are recommended to purchase a revision guide from Hodder Education which is specific to the Eduqas syllabus. Students will also be issued with a past paper booklet with the relevant mark scheme to help build key exam skills.

Computer Science

Exam board: OCR

Assessment Overview:

Paper 1 - Computer Systems - 1 hour 30 minutes – 50% of total grade

Paper 2 - Computational Thinking, Algorithms & Programming - 1 hour 30 minutes – 50% of total grade .

Advice on revision: In Year 10, the main focus is on learning the theory content for Paper 1. This includes a wide range of topics such as systems architecture, networking, and how data is represented using binary. At the same time, we continue to develop the programming skills introduced at Key Stage 3, laying the foundations for Paper 2, which becomes the main focus in Year 11.

Pupils should make full use of our comprehensively resourced VLE page, which includes lesson materials, topic videos, and past papers. This should be their first stop when revising. In addition, the Next Steps section of the VLE offers programming tutorials and challenges for pupils who want to extend their skills beyond the classroom.

Creative iMedia

Exam board: OCR Cambridge Nationals

Assessment Overview:

R094: Visual Identity and Digital Graphics – Coursework – 25% of total grade.

R093: Creative iMedia in the Media Industry – Written exam – 1 hour 30 minutes – 40% of total grade.

Remaining 35% is completed in Year 11 through a second NEA project.

Advice on revision: In Year 10, pupils complete their first assessed project: R094 – Visual Identity and Digital Graphics. This involves planning, creating, and evaluating original digital media products and contributes 25% of the final grade. Alongside this, pupils begin studying the theory content for the R093 exam, which covers topics such as media industry sectors, job roles, pre-production planning, and legal considerations.

To support their revision, pupils should regularly access the Creative iMedia VLE page, which contains past papers, lesson resources, and topic videos. This should be their main hub for revision and exam preparation.

Design Technology: Product Design Route

Exam board: AQA

Assessment Overview: 50% exam / 50% coursework

Advice on revision: Specific D&T revision guides and workbooks are available from the design and technology department at a cost of £6.00. Students should see their D&T teacher if they wish to purchase one. Past papers are available from their D&T teacher on request. There are a number of revision resources available on the VLE, GCSE page.

Design Technology: Textiles Route

Exam board: Eduqas

Assessment Overview: 50% exam / 50% non exam assessment (two pieces completed in Year 11)

Advice on revision: Exam board specific revision books will be available to purchase from the design and technology department at the beginning of Year 10 at a cost of £8.00. In addition, students will be given a revision pack with past papers and worksheets in Year 11. The D&T Textiles page on the VLE is full of lots of support materials for the NEA and the exam.

Design technology: Food preparation and nutrition

Exam board: Eduqas

Assessment Overview: 50% exam / 50% non exam assessment (two pieces completed in Year 11)

Advice on revision: All pupils have access to a digital textbook available to all students through the school's VLE. In addition, a revision guide will be provided and an additional revision guide and workbook can be purchased through school in Year 11.

Students will be given many revision aids and help sheets and our VLE pages will provide numerous support materials, example questions and other useful resources.

Drama

Exam board: Pearson Edexcel.

Assessment Overview: 30% practical/ 70% written (one written exam worth 40% and a NEA portfolio worth 30%).

Advice on revision: Year 10 will begin with building the core skills required for GCSE Drama and a mock scripted performance. After Christmas students will take part in a devising project and complete the accompanying NEA; this unit is worth 40% in total and will be submitted to Edexcel for moderation. At the end of the year, we will begin preparation for the written exam as we develop our understanding of An Inspector Calls. Students will be provided with a workbook for this unit although it will not be officially assessed until Year 11.

English Language

Exam board: AQA

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

Advice on revision: The GCSE English Language course culminates in two 1 hour 45 minute exams. The first of these tests students on their ability to analyse unseen literary fiction and will also require them to produce a short piece of creative writing; the second tests students on their ability to analyse unseen non-fiction and will also require them to produce a short piece of functional writing.

Students will be taught English Language and English Literature separately and two lessons a fortnight in Y10 will be devoted to preparing for the English Language exam. Lessons in Y10 will be focused primarily on the writing elements of the exam through the study of a variety of thematic units. In the first half of the summer term, students will also be prepared for the speaking element of their GCSE and this will be assessed in the second half of the summer term.

The CPG GCSE English Language AQA Revision Guide for the 9-1 course is a good, overall practical guide to what is required:

<https://www.cgpbooks.co.uk/secondary-books/gcse/english/english-lang/enar41-gcse-english-language-aqa-revision>

English Literature

Exam board: AQA

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

Advice on revision: The GCSE English Literature course culminates in two exams: the first of these lasts for 1 hour and 45 minutes and will require students to answer questions on a Shakespeare play (Macbeth) and on a nineteenth century novel (A Christmas Carol); the second exam lasts for 2 hours and 15 minutes and will require students to answer questions on the play *An Inspector Calls* and on a range of 19th, 20th and 21st century poetry both seen and unseen.

There are CPG revision guides available for all the texts that we study as well as a huge range of internet-based resources which can be accessed simply by searching the name of the text. In Year 10, students will study A Christmas Carol, An Inspector Calls and the Power & Conflict poetry anthology.

GCSE Exam and Coursework / Controlled Assessment					
September		October		November	
December		January			
Physical Education Practical assessment continual moderation (external moderation April/May Year 11)					
		Drama Mock Scripted Performance		Drama Devised Performance Unit.	
Art Coursework begins (ends January Year 11)		Art Coursework workshops (ending in May)			

February	March	April	May	June
		All subjects Trial exams		GCSE units
			English Literature Paper 2 (Trial exam)	Controlled assessments to be completed
	Music Non exam assessment: Composition (as part of trial exams)			DT: Product Design and Textiles Start of NEA
	Creative iMedia Unit R094 Graphic Design coursework completed	Music Non exam assessment: Performing (as part of trial exams)		
			Health & Social Care Submission deadline for NEA unit RO33	
Drama Devised Performance Unit.				
			Drama NEA Portfolio Deadline	
Art Coursework workshops (ending in May)			Art Preparation for Year 11 mock exam begins - booklet distributed	

Year 10 Timetable September 2025 - June 2026

French

Exam board: Pearson Edexcel

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

Advice on revision guides: A Grammar and Translation workbook will be available for students to purchase and further details will be sent home during the course of the year. We highly recommend that all pupils buy this great resource.

Students should also log onto the VLE and complete the activities in the GCSE French section. Here students can access the core vocabulary list, grammar notes and practice exercises. Further activities can also be found on the <https://activehub.pearson.com/> website. All students have been told their login and password details in class.

Students will also find the following websites helpful:

www.languagesonline.co.uk - grammar section

www.linguascope.co.uk - intermediate vocabulary section.

Geography

Exam board: AQA Geography

Assessment Overview: 100% exam (3 papers)

Human and physical geography is taught across the course alongside contrasting fieldwork experiences. Pupils will conduct a field study on regeneration in Bristol in Year 10, and a river study to Blackpool Brook in Year 11. In the spring of Year 11 there will also be a session to study a topical geographical issue chosen by the exam board.

Advice on revision: There will be a range of textbooks used throughout the course as well as resources to supplement the teaching of the content. Pupils will also be given a specification sheet for each topic to act as a 'tick sheet' for what needs to be known for the exam. Pupils will be given a past paper question booklet for each topic to practice exam skills throughout the course. We recommend that pupils make flash cards of all key content as they progress through the course. At the start of each academic year there will be an opportunity to purchase a range of resources to supplement pupils' notes and help with revision.

Health & Social Care

Exam board: OCR Cambridge National in Health & Social Care (2022)
Level 2

Assessment Overview: 40% exam / 60% NEA

Advice on revision: In Year 10 the main focus is on completion of the first NEA Unit (RO33) plus beginning the second (RO35). As a result no revision materials will be necessary until Year 11. There will however be a range of textbooks and teaching resources used throughout the year to supplement the teaching of the content. Students will also have regular access to example exam questions and feedback relating to the mark schemes.

History

Exam board: AQA History (8145)

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

Paper 1 - Germany 1890-1945/ The Cold War 1945-1972 (studied in Year 10)

Paper 2 - Restoration England 1660-1685. Migration, Empires and People, AD790- to the present day (studied in Year 11).

Advice on revision: Revision guides for the new GCSE (Grade 9-1) have been published that include some but not all of the topics we study. The department have created revision guides and resources for both paper 1 and paper 2 topics and pupils will be given copies of these (also available on the VLE).

Pupils will also find useful materials on BBC Bitesize for Germany, Conflict & Tension and the Migration topics. Pupils will also be directed to Seneca which covers the majority of our topics. Pupils and parents are advised to talk to the class teacher for any further advice on revision resources.

Mathematics

Exam board: Pearson Edexcel

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

End of year 11- Three exam papers each 90 minutes long. One non-calculator paper and two calculator papers. Foundation tier grades 1-5. Higher tier grades 4-9.

In Year 10 students complete progress tests at the end of each half term. At the end of Year 10 students complete two exam papers - one non-calculator paper and one calculator paper.

Advice on revision: Pupils can use www.vle.mathswatch.com. Pupils should speak to their teacher for login information. We also recommend the Pearson target revision guides and the CGP practice exam papers. Both of which can be purchased from their maths teacher.

Music

Exam board: WJEC Eduqas

Assessment Overview: 40% Appraising — exam / 30% Performing / 30% Composing

Advice on revision: Textbooks are available to borrow from the department and resources are uploaded on the VLE under Music GCSE. Two revision guides are currently available. The Illuminate Publishing Music Revision Guide by Jan Richards will be made available to students in Year 11. A second WJEC & EDUQAS GCSE Music Revision Guide by David Ventura, published by Rhinegold Education, is available online if students wish to purchase their own copies. (Please note that the Listening Tests provided by the same publishers will be used in class and it is not necessary for students to purchase this.) Please note when looking at information online, it is WJEC Eduqas - there are differences from the WJEC Music course.

Physical Education

Exam board: AQA

Assessment Overview: 60% exam / 40% practical coursework

Advice on revision: Revision guides are available at £3 each from the sports hall office.

Additional support material available on the VLE under physical education, including links to GCSE Bitesize.

Religion - Philosophy & Ethics

Exam board: AQA

Assessment Overview: 100% exam. 1 hour 45 minutes hours Philosophy & Ethics / 1 hour 45 minutes hour Christian beliefs & practice and Buddhist philosophy, beliefs & practice.

Advice on revision: We are able to get revision guides for you at a discounted rate during the September of Year 11. These are the AQA Religious Studies A Christianity and Buddhism complete revision guide by Dawn Cox.

If you would like to buy any additional textbooks the AQA Religious Studies A Christianity and Buddhism book by Fleming, Nagapriya and Smith is what we would recommend.

Russian

Exam board: Pearson Edexcel

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

Advice on revision: Advice on revision guides: An extensive range of revision materials can be found on the Russian GCSE section of VLE. Here students can access the core vocabulary list, grammar notes and practice exercises. There are also past papers with mark schemes and an online version of our GCSE revision guide.

The following website may also be useful: <http://www.russianforeveryone.com/>

Exam board: AQA Combined Science: Trilogy

Assessment Overview: 100% exam in Year 11

Advice on revision: The science department will issue students a published CGP revision guide for the course in Year 10 that will cover all the content from Year 9 to Year 11. In addition to this, in Y11 the students will be given a link to the revision section of the VLE where they can find a glossary of keywords, quiz questions, past papers and model answers.

The course contains a number of 'required practicals' that need to be revised for the examinations in Year 11. Students will be given their required practical booklet after the completion of the final practical. Required practicals are also covered in the revision guides.

Additionally, Malmesbury School have produced some excellent videos of the GCSE required practicals, that are helpful for revision: search for 'Malmesbury science' on YouTube.

The Balcarras VLE contains the summary front sheets for each topic along with the resources used for each lesson. Students can access these if they miss a lesson or for revision.

Other websites suitable for revision are as follows:

<https://app.senecalearning.com/login>

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

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

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

<https://cognitoedu.org>

<https://classroom.thenational.academy/subjects-by-key-stage/key-stage-4/subjects/combined-science>

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

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

Exam board: Pearson Edexcel

Assessment Overview: 100% exam

Advice on revision guides: A Grammar and Translation workbook will be available for students to purchase and further details will be sent home during the course of the year. We highly recommend that all pupils buy this great resource.

Students should also log onto the VLE and complete the activities in the GCSE Spanish section. Here students can access the core vocabulary list, grammar notes and practice exercises. Further activities can also be found on the <https://activehub.pearson.com/> website. All students have been told their login and password details in class.

Students will also find the following websites helpful:

www.languagesonline.co.uk - grammar section

www.linguascope.co.uk - intermediate vocabulary section.

Curriculum-related questions

Should you have any curriculum-related questions, please contact the relevant Head of Department.

You can do so by emailing Balcarras School at admin@balcarras.gloucs.sch.uk and requesting that your query be directed to the relevant Head of Department and your child's Head of House.

Departments	Heads of Departments
Art	Mr D Hazael
Business Studies	Mr L Perry
Computing	Mr S Cooper
DT: Product Design	Mrs J Swanepoel
DT: Food & Nutrition	Mrs C Saunders
DT: Textiles	Miss A Clements
Drama	Mrs H Went
English	Mr D Sharkey
Geography	Mrs A Searle
Health & Social Care	Mrs C Timpson
History	Mr M Stoker
Mathematics	Mr S Critchley
Modern Languages	Mr F Seguin
Music	Mr D Armstrong
Physical Education	Mr M Harvey
Philosophy & Ethics	Mrs H Ebanja
Science	Mr A Spring Wallis

Notes



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